the weekly Standard

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NOVEMBER 3 /
NOVEMBER 10, 2008

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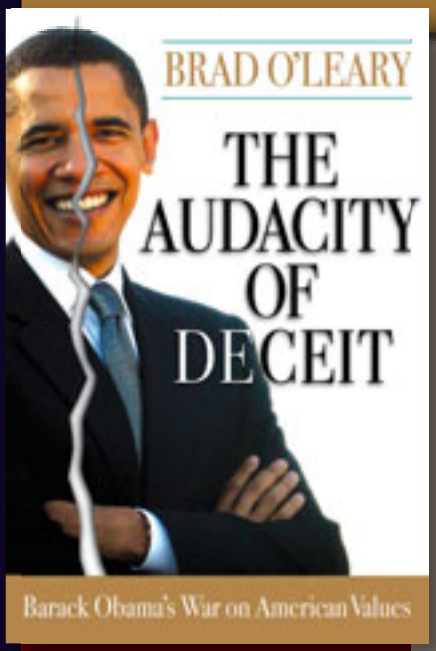

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—Paul E. Peterson and Daniel Nadler

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—Milton Gaither

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Speaking in Code

The next time somebody suggests that America's schoolchildren should be reading a daily newspaper to learn about the world—you know, newspapers as an educational resource, and so on—THE SCRAPBOOK recommends that you tell him about Lewis Diuguid. He's a columnist for the *Kansas City Star*.

And he's very angry about John McCain and Sarah Palin because, as he writes, "the 'socialist' label that [McCain and Palin] are trying to attach to Sen. Barack Obama has actually long and very ugly historical roots. J. Edgar Hoover . . . used the term liberally to describe African Americans who spent their lives fighting for equality."

No, he didn't. Of socialists, J. Edgar Hoover "used the term liberally" to describe American leftists of all races, creeds, sexes, and national origins—especially those, otherwise known as Communists, who exalted the Soviet Union at the expense of their own country.

"McCain and Palin have simply reached back in history to use an old code word for black," claims Diuguid. No, they haven't. "Socialist" was never a code word for "black" in America, since the overwhelming number of socialists in the United States were (and are) white folks. And when Lewis Diuguid writes that the word socialist "set whites apart from those deemed un-American and those who could not be trusted during the communism scare," he is not only incoherent but astonishingly ill-informed: To accuse someone of being a socialist is to criticize him for his political convictions, not their race.

Indeed, not only is Lewis Diuguid ignorant; he is dishonest as well. For when called upon to provide examples of African Americans J. Edgar Hoover accused of being socialists, he cites W.E.B. Dubois—who not only was a self-proclaimed socialist but a member of the Communist party as well!—and Paul Robeson, whom Diuguid describes this way: "A famous singer, actor and political activist who in the 1930s became involved in national and international movements for better labor relations, peace and racial justice."

That is a little like saying that Osama bin Laden is a famous writer, broadcaster, and political activist who is involved in national and international movements for self-improvement and religious justice. Take note, readers of Lewis Diuguid's *Kansas City Star*: Paul Robeson (1898-1976) was a famous singer, actor, and political activist who was also a dedicated, lifelong Stalinist who defended every Soviet outrage from mass starvation to the Moscow Trials to the invasion of Finland and the suppression of democratic revolts in East Berlin and Hungary.

It would have been an act of kindness—not to say an understatement—to refer to Paul Robeson as a "socialist." ♦

Spinning Hearts and Minds

Say what you will about President Bush reading "The Pet Goat" to a group of youngsters. At least he did not take advantage of his captive audience to throw in a reference to annoying liberals like Robert F. Kennedy Jr. The activist son of the late Democratic icon, on the other hand, recently gave a reading of his latest book on Civil War hero and former slave Robert Smalls.

According to the *Washington Post*, Kennedy asked the group of students if they knew what party Abraham Lincoln had belonged to. They correctly answered Republican. At which point the author could not resist to add, "You're right. That's when the Republicans used to be the good guys."

One of the chaperones was not amused, saying, "I'm tired of people making these blanket generalizations. . . . How do you know how a child processes that?" But RFK Jr. defended his remark "since those children struck me as exceptionally bright and capable of making their own political determination" and would not be swayed by the pronouncements of a Kennedy. The students, by the way, are in the fourth grade. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'In the 1980s I envied my conservative friends who drew the curtain of the voting booth over an epiphany, whereas I groaned beneath my philosophical complexity when I voted for Reagan; and when I voted for Clinton a decade later, it was not without an exertion of casuistry about the distinction between supportable and admirable. I have not yet been asked for my vote by a candidate who represents the entirety of my convictions. I am not dismayed by this. Politics should not . . ." (Leon Wieseltier, *New Republic*, November 5). ♦

Eat, Pray, Whine

Elizabeth Gilbert, the bestselling author of *Eat, Pray, Love*, had a memorable essay in *Time* magazine the other week. In it, Gilbert goes on at length about how she can't get over the fact—we are not kidding about this—

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that her dad will vote for John McCain on November 4. Here's Gilbert:

> So why can't I leave it alone? I've become obsessed with my father's vote, losing sleep over it, worrying about it so much that you'd swear this entire election hinged on one man's choice. . . . I struggle because I'm trying to reconcile this man's wisdom against his sometimes mystifying decisions. Good Lord, how much simpler it is to dismiss your political foes when you don't know them personally! Knowing my father as I do, I'm forced to acknowledge that his political views come to him from an honest and thoughtful place, as do all of his most cherished beliefs. My dad, after all, is not a sucker or a scoundrel or a zealot, but a deeply principled individual. Yet he's gone and raised himself a deeply principled daughter who happens to see the world very differently. And this frightens me.

The best part comes when Gilbert unintentionally likens herself to a guard at a Maoist reeducation camp: "I sometimes long to call my dad and beg him or scold him or force him to accept my worldview. It would certainly make me feel more comfortable if he surrendered."

Sure it would. Meanwhile, though: Why don't you leave the poor man alone? ♦

You've Got to Be Kidding

Hard-hitting political analysis from the "preeminent intellectual newspaper in English":

"The problem was not Obama; the problem was that at the instant when Hillary Clinton at last conceded, the nature of the campaign changed. It was, I considered (perhaps under the influence of the kind smile and exhortatory squeeze on the arm bestowed on me by Jimmy Carter, president of my darkest adolescence, as he passed me in the doorway of a LoDo Mexican restaurant), like the change that might occur between the first and second volumes of some spectacular science fiction fantasy epic.

"At the end of the first volume, after bitter struggle, Obama had claimed the presumptive nomination. We Fremen had done the impossible, against Sardaukar and imperial shock troops alike. We had brought water to Arrakis. Now the gathered tribes of the Democratic Party—hacks, Teamsters, hat ladies, New Mexicans, residents of those states most nearly resembling Canada, Jews of South Florida, dreadlocks, crewcuts, elderlies and goths, a cowboy or two, sons and daughters of interned Japanese-Americans—had assembled on the plains of Denver to attempt to vanquish old Saruman McCain" (Michael Chabon, "Obama & the Conquest of Denver," the *New York Review of Books*, October 9, 2008). ♦

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More Scrapbook!

Bank on It

The chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Sheila Bair, is a highly dedicated public servant who, in addition to recently saving the banking system, is also a published children's author. Her book, *Rock, Brock, and the Savings Shock*, illustrated by Barry Gott, came out in 2006, and—we are pleased to report—it is utterly charming. It tells the story of twins named Rock and Brock and the lesson in compound interest taught to them by their grandfather. "Rock was a nearly perfect guy," Bair writes, "but here's the thing: he loved to buy." Brock, however, "lived like a slob, but saved his money by the gob."

One day the twins' grandpa proposes a savings plan: "For ten straight weeks each Saturday," Gramps says, "I'll give you each one dollar's pay / to mow my lawn and wash my car. These simple chores will get you far / because I'll do a little trick: each buck you save, I'll match it quick!"

Gramps hands out the money, and the twins are off to the races. Brock saves his dollar, but "Rock's mind was stuck / on what he could buy with his crisp new buck." Rock splurges. Each week he spends his dollar on things like "a moose head for his wall," "green hair goo," "wax fangs tasting like peppermint," "broccoli-flavored chewing gum," and a "giant wind-up tsetse fly" (see above).

Brock, meanwhile, continues to save. After 10 weeks, Bair goes on, "Poor Rock was doomed. He had no cash; Brock's had ballooned! With matching dollars, at the end, Brock had five hundred twelve to spend!" He uses the money to buy gifts for his family and open a joint savings account with his brother. The moral of the story is clear. Thrift, and brotherhood, win in the end, while spending all one's money leads to no money at all, or worse. It's a lesson so simple that just about every American alive seems to have forgotten it.

Now all we need is for someone to send 535 copies of *Rock, Brock, and the Savings Shock* to all the Rocks of Capitol Hill. ♦

Félicitations

Of special interest to The Scrapbook's Francophone readers: With great admiration we note the arrival (in French bookstores, pending an English translation) of our contributor Michel Gurfinkiel's powerful book on the Holocaust, *Un devoir de mémoire*. Drawing courageously on personal memories of the Shoah and summarizing reflections on how the war against the Jews has been discussed and remembered, Gurfinkiel reaches the conclusion that there is scarcely a greater imperative than to do the necessary "homework" (*devoir* in French means that as well as "duty") to enable each generation to understand what happened.

A photograph of a smiling child, murdered at age nine, the older brother Michel never knew, stood on his tailor father's work-table for decades, as it now stands on the writer son's. This picture, at once intensely private and yet world-historical, inspired the book: a response to a thoughtful, but controversial, suggestion by President Nicolas Sarkozy on how to fit the Holocaust into the curriculum of French schools. Why not, suggested Sarkozy, have every sixth-grader "adopt" a lost French Jewish child and, in finding out the child's fate, learn history while developing a moral conscience?

In terse, exact prose and with muted passion, Gurfinkiel narrates the story of parents who survived deportation to the camps and years of hiding with the help of "righteous gentiles" in France. Finding murdered spouses and lost families—and each other—in the debris of their martyred community, they chose life, as commanded by Scripture, and began anew. More accurately: They continued, which is what their son enjoins his readers, Jews and Gentiles alike, to do. ♦

Hu Dunnit

A tip of The Scrapbook's homburg to Chinese democracy activist Hu Jia, who was awarded the EU Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought last week. The 35-year-old Hu has championed the cause of human rights in China, paying particular attention to those Chinese suffering from HIV/AIDS. According to the European Parliament's citation, the Sakharov Prize is awarded to those "individuals or organizations who have made an important contribution to the fight for human rights or democracy." Past recipients include Nelson Mandela and Aung Sang Suu Kyi.

Hu was unable to accept the award, of course. He remains imprisoned in Beijing, serving a three-and-a-half-year sentence for publicly criticizing the ruling Chinese Communist party. ♦

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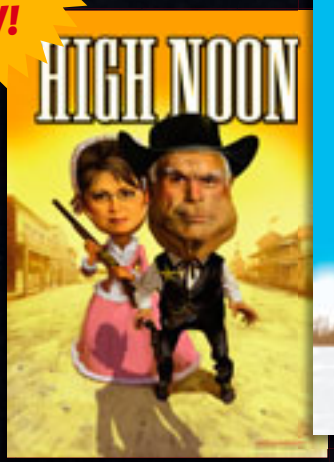

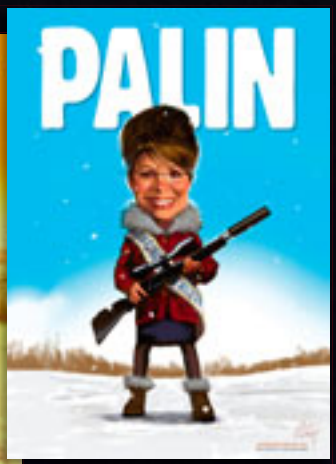

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Casual

Put to the Test

It was a bright, breezy morning of drifting sunlight and chorusing birds, so I decided to ruin it by taking the SAT. The SAT used to be the Scholastic Aptitude Test. In the early 1990s, at the height of political correctness, the name was changed to Scholastic Assessment Test, "aptitude" having been suddenly revealed as a culturally conditioned construct, hence exclusionary, hence unacceptable.

Still the three letters can make the blood of a high school senior run cold—make the blood run cold of anyone who ever was a high school senior and had hopes of moving on to college one day, to a life of beer and oversleeping. SAT was the final snare to be got through. Escape it with a good showing, and you could enroll in a nice school, maybe bag a little scholarship money, and earn the right forever after to lie about your score.

So fearsome is the SAT that an opportunistic "test prep" industry has formed around it, including practice books that contain old tests, where I found the one I took the other day. I was moved to do this by paternal fellow-feeling—one of my kids was taking the test that morning, too—but also by a suspicion that several decades of watching TV news, rearing children, drinking Scotch, and writing for newspapers had caused an irreversible decline in my own aptitude, if you'll pardon the expression. I was curious to see if the decline could be quantified.

And so I set my timer and opened the book.

The pages looked unpleasantly familiar, as though I were encountering a neighborhood bully I hadn't seen in 20 years. The answer sheet looked just the same: still the tidy rows of little ovals, beckoning me to fill them in wrong. The block arrows were still stamped at the foot of the test page, still demanding: "Go on to the next page," until you reached the even more forbidding: "Stop: Do not turn to any other section in the test."

Can we talk about exclusionary? SAT math is exclusionary. Here was nothing so straightforward as long division or multiplication. Page after page was strewn with *x*'s and *y*'s in weird combinations, bunched into equations and wrapped in parentheses, crouched

HAL MAYFORTH

under slash marks, sneaking around the corners of triangles, every hieroglyph laid out in a line and marching straight into a question mark, as if to say, "*Well?*" As I gazed at the problems I felt excluded, objectified, condemned to second-class citizenship in a patriarchal old boys' network of people who were much, much smarter than me. When the timer chimed I had finished 11 of the 20 problems.

I felt better about "Critical Reading," once known as the "verbal" section of the test. But it was with the "essay" section that I regained a scholastic toehold. The essay is a new and controversial part of the SAT. Studies have shown that students can make gross errors of fact and logic in their essays and still get a splendid score (and then a job at the *New Yorker*). My test required that I write an essay in 20 minutes on the question, "Do small events lead to catastrophes or are great events initiated by other causes?"

You'll notice that on the master list of the world's most thoughtful questions, this one does not rank incredibly high. It is, in fact, dumb, since the two alternatives the question presents as mutually exclusive could both easily be true. Even so, I filled both sides of the sheet with muscular prose, impish quips, and a learned allusion to the advent of the First World War. My closing lines cut to the very heart of historical causation: "Great oaks come from the smallest seeds. But where do the seeds come from?"

I waited for my son to return from taking his SAT. We graded my test together. My math score was a disaster—in layman's terms, lower than *lobotomy patient*, higher than *Yankees fan*. Critical Reading was totally solid. As for the essay, it was graded on a one-to-six scale. I knocked a point off for modesty's sake and gave myself a score of five. I tried not to watch my son as he read.

"Three," he said at last.

"Three?"

"Maybe two."

"Two?"

"The prep booklets all say the same thing," he said. "You need three supporting examples. You've got that one thing about the First World War. And you end with a question. Why would you end with a question? You're supposed to be making a *point*."

I could see he was trying not to roll his eyes.

"Maybe that's okay for a magazine or a book," he went on. "But this is the SAT. You can't get away with that stuff on the SAT."

I toted up my score. The decline could indeed be quantified. He clapped me on the shoulder in commiseration.

"It's a long time since you've been tested, isn't it?"

Andrew Ferguson

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the weekly Standard

McCain Versus the Juggernaut

It's always darkest before it goes totally black. This is one of John McCain's favorite remarks, ascribed (apocryphally, it seems) to Chairman Mao. Well, with 10 days to go before the election, it's getting pretty dark out there.

Still, we hope for a McCain-Palin victory, for the sake of the country. And also for the pleasure of seeing the dejection of the mainstream media, the incredulity of the leftwing triumphalists, and the humiliation of the pathetically opportunistic "conservatives" who've been desperately clambering on board the Obama juggernaut. We're proud to stay off that juggernaut. We're proud, in our modest way, to stand with John McCain and Sarah Palin against it.

GARY LOCKE

An Obama-Biden administration—working with a Democratic Congress—would mean a more debilitating nanny state at home and a weaker nation facing our enemies abroad. We, of course, have confidence that the nation would survive such an interlude, and we would even hope that a President Obama might adjust course from the path he's advertised, especially in foreign policy. But the risk of real damage is great, especially when compared with the prospect of a tough-minded center-right McCain-Palin administration that could lead the country sensibly through these difficult times.

Reading the endorsements of Obama in the liberal media should strengthen the determination of all believers in American self-government and greatness to fight this election campaign to the end. *Time* magazine's Joe Klein tells us that Obama "seems a grown-up, in a nation that badly needs some adult supervision." To the contrary, we are a nation of adults. We don't need the "supervision" of a conventionally liberal and totally untested junior senator whose most impressive lifetime achievement has been the construction of an effective narrative about himself.

But wait. Obama does have one great achievement. He's run a good campaign. The *New York Times* tells us, "After nearly two years of a grueling and ugly campaign, Senator Barack Obama of Illinois has proved that he is the right choice to be the 44th president of the United States." And how has he proved this? "Mr. Obama has met challenge after challenge, growing as a leader and putting real flesh on his early promises of hope and change."

The "challenges" Obama has met have been political and electoral. He's met them well, and we'd be the first to pay tribute to his disciplined and effective campaign. Still, is this "proof" of a capacity to be president? Obama has run the most impressive campaign by a non-incumbent since George W. Bush in 2000, and by a non-incumbent Democrat since Jimmy Carter in 1976. Do the Obama acolytes want to hold up the Bush or Carter administrations as models for the proposition that a good campaign translates into a good presidency?

We also hear a lot of squeaking from rats deserting the McCain ship about Barack Obama's exemplary temperament. So what? If he'd had his way, Obama would have lost the war in Iraq—with equanimity. He would have been calm, cool, and collected as U.S. interests were sacrificed and U.S. honor besmirched. Neville Chamberlain also had a fine temperament and a good intellect. Joe Biden, by the way, has neither. But he did—much as he now wishes people to forget it—support the Iraq war. These days, he can barely be bothered even to mention

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Iraq. Oh well, start a war, lose a war. Gotta move on.

John McCain didn't move on. He helped to win the war. In a fine article on *National Review Online* last week, Byron York reported on a moment at a McCain rally:

> "I just gave John McCain my Purple Heart," Marine Sgt. Jack Eubanks told me a few minutes after McCain finished a speech at a campaign rally in Woodbridge, Virginia, Saturday. "I said, 'I want to give this to you, sir, as a reminder that we want you to keep your promise to bring us home in victory and honor, so it will mean something.'"

The 22-year-old Eubanks has been injured twice in Iraq. He's now teaching Marine recruits at Quantico—and walking with a cane. York explains that Eubanks saw remarkable progress in Iraq between his 2005 and 2007 tours and is concerned that it might all be for naught. "I think Obama's just going to pull everyone home as soon as he can, despite what's going on over there," he told York. "I just don't want it to turn into another Vietnam or worse where everything we fought for, and all my buddies who died over there, it was just for nothing."

We would hope that Obama might be more responsible with respect to Iraq as president than he was as senator, now that the surge he opposed and derided has worked. But hope is all anyone can do. And in dealing with other foreign threats, he'd more than likely follow his natural inclination—reflexively liberal, post-nationalist, timid to a fault.

If Obama wins, we wish him well. But for now, we can only echo the words of the 30-year-old Abraham Lincoln. On December 26, 1839, responding to the confident prediction of one of his political opponents "that every State in the Union will vote for Mr. Van Buren at the next Presidential election" and that Lincoln's opposition to the Van Buren forces was therefore bound to be in vain, Lincoln responded:

> Address that argument to cowards and to knaves; with the free and the brave it will effect nothing. It may be true; if it must, let it. . . . The probability that we may fall in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just. . . . Let none falter, who thinks he is right, and we may succeed. But if after all, we shall fail, be it so.

As it happens, the Whig ticket Lincoln supported won that 1840 election. So might, against the odds, the party of Lincoln win this year.

—*William Kristol*

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To Know Her Is To Respect Her

The great Palin divide.

BY FRED BARNES

Lorne Michaels is the longtime executive producer of *Saturday Night Live*. Sarah Palin appeared on *SNL* in mid-October, after which Michaels noted, "Her politics aren't my politics." But that wasn't all he said. "I think Palin will continue to be underestimated," Michaels told EW.com. "I watched the way she connected with people, and … you can see that she's a very powerful, very disciplined, incredibly gracious woman. This was her first time out and she's had a huge impact. People connect to her."

Randy Ruedrich, the Republican chairman in Alaska, is someone you might suspect would be a friend and ally of Palin. He isn't. She helped drive him off the state's Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, criticized him publicly, and later tried to get him ousted as party chairman. Ruedrich is part of the "body count" of male politicians Palin left behind as she rose to become governor of Alaska. Yet Ruedrich says Palin is smart, very capable, and a political star.

Ruedrich isn't alone among Alaska politicians who take a cold-blooded view of Palin. Another Republican who has followed her career closely believes Palin has a ruthless streak. Yet this person, too, regards Palin as a rare talent with the skill and self-confidence to be a national political leader. And Palin's Alaska acquaintances were certain, from the moment she became John McCain's vice presidential running mate, that her acceptance speech would be a smashing success and she'd have little trouble in her debate with Joe Biden. Turned out they were right.

Sarah Palin

REUTERS / BRIAN SNYDER

But that didn't matter. The positive assessment of Palin by those who know her or have worked with her has come close to being drowned out by her critics, from the right and the left. Kathleen Parker, a conservative columnist, wrote last week that McCain was seduced by Palin's attractiveness into picking her as his running mate. The basis for Parker's conclusion was a comment by her husband about Palin, seconded by a friend ("I'm sexually attracted to her"), and a magazine article. Palin doesn't recall ever having met Parker, much less been interviewed by her.

Peggy Noonan, the former White House speechwriter for President Reagan who now writes for the *Wall Street Journal*, has run hot and cold on Palin, mostly cold. What appears to be her final judgment is that Palin's nomination for vice president is "no good, not for conservatism and not for the country. And, yes, it's a mark against John McCain." Palin and Noonan have never conversed either.

David Brooks, the *New York Times* columnist, has rendered an even harsher verdict, calling Palin "a fatal cancer to the Republican party." So far as Palin knows, she's never met Brooks or been interviewed by him.

And then there's the view of Matthew Dowd, a top strategist for President Bush's reelection campaign in 2004. He's been quoted as saying that McCain actually knows now that Palin is unqualified to be vice president. By choosing her, McCain "put the country at risk."

The difference of opinion here, between those who know Palin and those who don't, is unusual. The criticism of Palin is personal. Normally in politics, campaign operatives are called on to make excuses for a dull and uninspiring candidate. Invariably, they explain that in private, especially face-to-face with a small group of voters, the candidate is dazzlingly likable and enormously persuasive.

With Palin, it's the opposite. No one questions her ability to excite a crowd. Simply by stepping on stage at rallies, Palin rouses audiences, and her speeches are frequently interrupted by chants of "Sarah, Sarah, Sarah."

It's the private Palin, the person—who she is, what she knows, her lack of experience—that has provoked both the strongest criticism and most legitimate doubts about her readiness to be first in the line of succession if the president dies or is incapacitated.

A media person I know dismisses her as "a journalism graduate of the University of Idaho." This is pure snobbery. I asked him to name his favorite president of the past 60 or 70 years, and he chose Harry Truman. Truman never went to college but became a pretty good president nonetheless when he succeeded FDR after only a few weeks as vice president.

The issue of experience is more serious. Palin, a governor for less than two years, has no record in national affairs, with the exception of one issue—energy. And with gasoline prices falling, that issue has become less important than expected in the campaign.

On foreign and national security affairs, Palin has a knowledge gap. Indeed, if she knew more, she might have skewered Biden for the whoppers he told—about the Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan—in their debate on October 2. The press, while critical of Palin, didn't notice the inaccuracies either, or at least failed to draw attention to them.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Lack of experience is a recurring issue not only for vice presidential candidates, but for presidential nominees as well. Barack Obama has been attacked for his limited experience in foreign policy. And though Biden, his running mate, has spent 36 years in the Senate, he seems to have learned very little from this experience.

Palin is in a familiar situation. Governors who run for national office automatically face questions about their inexperience in foreign affairs. Ronald Reagan did. Bill Clinton did. So did George W. Bush. Had Obama picked Virginia governor Tim Kaine as his veep, Kaine would have been hit with those questions. If McCain had chosen Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty (as he came close to doing), Pawlenty would have faced the same doubts. So the qualms about Palin's experience are merely par for the course.

Palin's record is another critical test of her personal skill as a leader. What has she done? A lot more than Kaine or Pawlenty or most governors. She ousted an incumbent governor of her own party, successfully fought corruption in the party, and tore up a deal with oil companies, forcing them to accept a less lucrative agreement on a new natural gas pipeline.

In judging Palin, it comes down to who is more credible. Is it those who've worked with her, or know her, or have at least met and talked with her? Or those who haven't? The answer is a no-brainer. Okay, I may be biased on the subject of Palin, having been impressed after spending nearly two hours with her on one occasion and an hour on another.

My advice is ignore the critics who know far less about Palin than she does about foreign policy. A good example is Ken Adelman, who headed the arms control agency in the Reagan administration. Adelman recently endorsed Obama and said he "would not have hired [Palin] for even a mid-level post in the arms control agency." Well, I know both Palin and Adelman. And Ken, I'm sorry to tell you, but I think there are an awful lot of jobs in Washington that Palin would get before you. ♦

The Disappearing Issue of Election '08

McCain no longer talks much about national security, alas. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

In July 2007, pollsters for the *New York Times* and CBS News asked respondents to name the issues most important to them as they considered which candidate they would support for president. The top choice for both Republicans and Democrats was national security—Iraq for Democrats, terrorism for Republicans.

That was then. Today national security has virtually disappeared from the presidential campaign. In a *New York Times*/CBS poll taken in mid-October, 57 percent of respondents cited the economy as their top issue. Only 9 percent cited terrorism, and 7 percent cited the Iraq war.

These results are hardly surprising. The housing market is in tatters, a Republican administration is aggressively defending its decision to partially nationalize America's biggest banks, and nearly every economist in the prognostication business is saying that the United States is heading toward a severe recession.

But the shift remains stunning. For seven years, the country has been obsessed with national security. The *New York Times* carried more extensive coverage of the Iraqi elections in 2005 than statewide contests in the United States. Khalid Sheikh Mohammad became a household name. So did David Petraeus. And as late as this spring, national security issues helped decide the nominees of both political parties. Barack Obama won, in no small part, because primary voters believed that he was more sincerely antiwar than the other Democrats running, especially Hillary Clinton. And John McCain won largely because voters believed he would be a better commander in chief than his Republican counterparts.

Judging from his remarks to an enthusiastic crowd in Dallas, Texas, on the March night he passed the 1,191 delegate mark needed to make him the GOP nominee, McCain expected—or, perhaps, hoped—that national security issues would play a major role in determining the next president. After thanking his supporters and speaking broadly about public service, McCain moved right to national security.

> Presidential candidates are judged on their records, their character and the whole of their life experiences. But we are also expected to concentrate our efforts on the challenges that will confront America on our watch and explain how we intend to address them. America is at war in two countries, and involved in a long and difficult fight with violent extremists who despise us, our values and modernity itself.

McCain defended the decision to remove Saddam Hussein and spoke of the need to win in Iraq, where "our most vital security interests" are involved. He said that a mismanaged exit could result in sectarian conflict, even genocide. He warned about terrorist attacks with "weapons we dare not allow" terrorists to possess and called for a stronger allied effort against al Qaeda in Afghanistan.

He was not finished.

> The next president must lead an effort to restructure our military, our intel-

Stephen F. Hayes, a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is the author of* Cheney: The Untold Story of America's Most Powerful and Controversial Vice President *(HarperCollins).*

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ligence, our diplomacy and all relevant branches of government to combat Islamic extremism, encourage the vast majority of moderates to win the battle for the soul of Islam, and meet the many other rising challenges in this changing world.

McCain did mention the economy and health care and jobs. But it was clear then that he saw a president's duties as commander in chief as more important than any other role.

McCain still believes this, but his campaign does not reflect his view, and his advisers seem to have convinced him that it is unwise to talk about anything other than the economy. Last weekend, in an appearance on *Fox News Sunday*, McCain was asked what the country might look like under four years of an Obama presidency with a Democratic Congress. It was a broad question, but McCain, who has made his reputation on national security and foreign policy issues, spoke exclusively about the economy.

In an interview aboard his campaign plane that same day, October 19, I noted the oversight and asked him about his answer.

TWS: Have we gotten to the point where it's almost dangerous to talk about foreign policy and national security?
McCain: No, not at all. But it's obvious that the economy is in crisis and that's what Americans really care about today and they are in a ditch. I don't have—you know you can only give so much in an answer—but obviously national security I mention in my speeches. We're in two wars, very dangerous times. And I mention in my speeches that Senator Obama would bring our troops home in defeat, and I'll bring 'em home in honor and victory. Right now, with people having trouble staying in their homes, keeping their jobs—we've lost over 700,000 jobs already this year—Americans, and I understand it, are focused on the economy.

Later in our conversation, McCain responded to a question about Iran's nuclear program by warning that failed diplomacy makes an Israeli strike against Iran more likely and that such an attack "could create a situation of crisis in the Middle East that is heretofore of unknown proportions."

So I tried again.

TWS: One of the reasons I wanted to do this interview is my sense that we in the national media sometimes switch topics and focus on one thing. And I think it's striking the lack of discussion of these issues at this time. Do you agree with that, or do you think we have to focus on the economy as we have?
McCain: I think that there are major national security challenges we face. But, like at the beginning of our conversation, people are having trouble staying in their homes, can't keep their jobs, can't afford their health care. I think it's understandable a person would say what's happening halfway around the world is not as important to me as my family's economic security. I think it's unfortunate, but I think it's understandable.

You know when we do these groups of Americans and say we're going to win in Iraq and succeed in Afghanistan. Hey great! If you ask them what priority one through ten are—the top nine are economic. We were just in Toledo. Houses all over Toledo are being foreclosed and abandoned.

I asked McCain if he still would make good on his pledge to hold a National Security Council meeting as the first thing he would do after being sworn in.

Oh yeah, I think we'd still have to do that—the security of the nation, even if the American people aren't entirely focused on it. You have to do that. But at the same time you have to assemble the best minds on the economic issues.

At other times in the interview, McCain directly answered my questions about threats, and he answered them well. (His denunciation of the Bush administration's new deal on North Korea was particularly stirring.) But, ironically, it was clear that McCain—who last year told the *Wall Street Journal*, "I know a lot less about economics than I do about military and foreign policy issues"—wanted to be talking about economics.

At roughly the same time I spoke with McCain, Democratic vice presidential candidate Joe Biden was rather inexplicably making national security relevant again.

"Mark my words, it will not be six months before the world tests Barack Obama like they did John Kennedy," Biden said at a Seattle fundraiser. "The world is looking. We're about to elect a brilliant 47-year-old senator president of the United States of America."

He added: "Remember I said it standing here if you don't remember anything else I said. Watch, we're gonna have an international crisis, a generated crisis, to test the mettle of this guy."

The McCain campaign pounced, putting out several press releases about Biden's outburst and, later in the week, holding conference calls with McCain surrogates like former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani and former CIA director Jim Woolsey. Both McCain and Palin highlighted Biden's comments in their stump speeches. "We don't want a president who invites testing from the world at a time when our economy is in crisis and Americans are already fighting in two wars," McCain said. "Yesterday Senator Obama tried to explain away this warning by saying that his running-mate sometimes engages in 'rhetorical flourishes.' That's another way of saying that he accidentally delivered some straight talk."

That same day, the McCain campaign released an ad focused on Biden's comments and touting McCain's national security credentials.

Including national security as part of McCain's closing argument is long overdue. No one argues that McCain should ignore the economy, but some McCain advisers point to the fact that national security issues are the only ones in which McCain continues to hold a sizeable polling advantage over Obama. They have been making the case internally that McCain should broaden his message. He's doing it now, but is it too late? ♦

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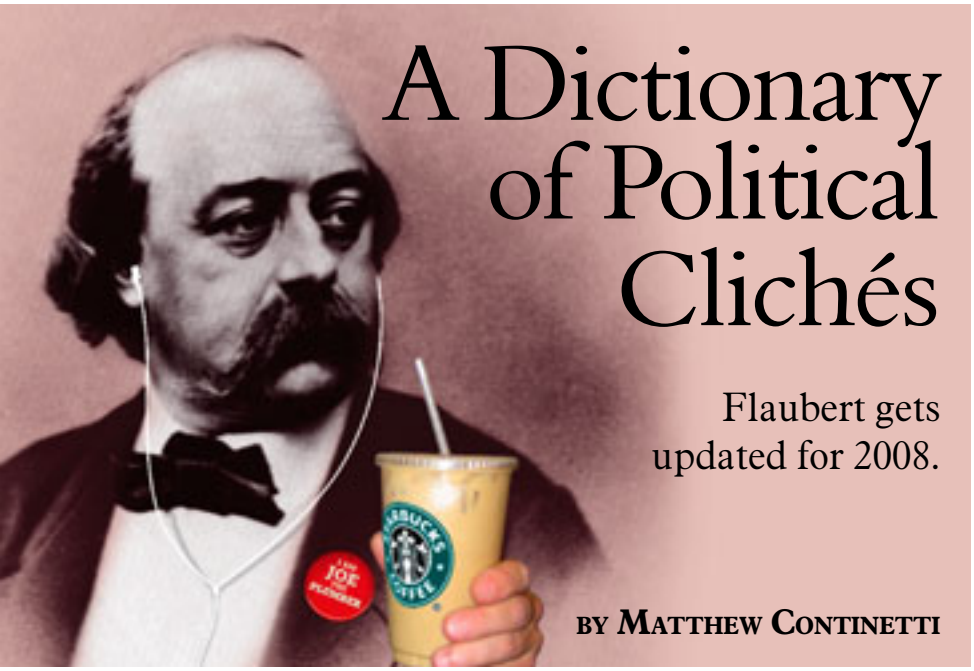

A Dictionary of Political Clichés

Flaubert gets updated for 2008.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

Published in 1881 as an appendix to his final novel, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, Flaubert's *Dictionnaire des Idées Reçues*—or Dictionary of Accepted Ideas—is a blistering satirical attack on philistinism, bourgeois culture, and literary convention. The author's sharp wit is in evidence throughout. He defines a *conservative* as a "politician with pot belly," *face* as the "mirror of the soul. Hence some people's souls must be rather ugly," and *optimist* as a "synonym for imbecile." Jacques Barzun's English translation, first published by New Directions in 1954, makes for entertaining reading and provides an understanding of the accepted ideas in 19th-century France.

Trouble is, clichés never stop. They really don't. They just keep going and going, like the Energizer Bunny. And there are never more clichés in circulation than during a presidential campaign. So, in the spirit of Flaubert, we spent a couple of days making our own dictionary of clichés. Our list contains terms particular to this campaign, so you won't see definitions of *electability* or *it all comes down to turnout* or *it's the economy, stupid* or *right-wing smear machine*. The right-wing smear machine is broken and due for repairs anyway.

The Base. Needs to be energized. Requires AA batteries (not included).

Bradley Effect. The only possible explanation for Obama not doing as well as we think he should. Not to be confused with the Butterfly Effect.

Change. We need it. Change was guaranteed to happen this election cycle, of course, as it happens in pretty much every election cycle. But not necessarily for the better. Change comes in both good and bad varieties. For example, change is good when it leads to undivided Democratic control of the United States government. Things worked out perfectly the last time this happened.

Clock. It's probably broken. Politicians, especially those running behind, are always trying to "reset" it.

Community Organizer. Perfect for the busy community. Allows it to schedule picnics, business meetings, doctor appointments, and so forth, as well as keep track of phone numbers and addresses in one easy-to-carry, pocket-sized device. Built-in pedometer optional.

Drill, Baby, Drill. A tool necessary for basic home repairs. Preferably cordless.

Drill

Food Security. An issue very important to Mike Huckabee—stop snickering—for all the obvious reasons.

Energy Independence. What the candidates hope to achieve in ten years. Actually, more like twenty. Or maybe twenty-five. Wait—why don't we make it thirty. Forty maybe? How does forty sound to you? Forty-five?

Experience. Unnecessary for presidents; absolutely necessary for vice presidents. Joe Biden, for example, has a tremendous amount of experience in being wrong. He was wrong about the Reagan defense buildup, wrong about the first Gulf war, says he was wrong about the second, and was definitely wrong about the surge. So much experience in being wrong is extremely rare. This is why he would make an excellent vice president.

From Wall Street to Main Street. A distance of seven miles (see map). Take the PATH train.

Wall Street to Main Street

Game-Changer. The doohickey that lets you flip from the Cowboys-Buccaneers to Redskins-Lions without having to get up from the Barca-Lounger. Also good for seeing what's on *BassMasters*. John McCain could sure use one right now.

Guns and Religion. What the bitter denizens of small towns in Pennsylvania and the Midwest cling to. This also includes, according to Barack Obama, "antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment." Not to be confused with Guns N' Roses.

Matthew Continetti is the associate editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD. Send your suggestions for more entries to *editor@weeklystandard.com*.

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Heft. What Joe Biden apparently lends—we are not making this up—to the Democratic ticket.

History. As in, "Either way, we're making history." One hears this expression a lot, from many different people, and no doubt about it, those people are right, because, technically, history is what we make *every single second*.

Joe the Plumber. Shorthand for hardworking American. Other examples: "Tito the Construction Worker," "Al the Shoe-salesman," "Doris the Cafeteria Worker," "Dick the Unemployed Chief Executive," "Annie the Bricklayer," "José the Lettuce-picker," "Matlock the Lawyer," "Jacqui the Thirty-something Occupational Therapist," "Willy the Groundskeeper," etc.

Maverick. Politician who bucks the party establishment in pursuit of reform—and receives absolutely no credit for doing so whatsoever.

Middle-Class Tax Cut. What you got coming to you in an Obama administration, even if you are not middle class and don't pay any income taxes. Unless of course you make more than $250,000 a year. In which case you better enjoy that money while it lasts.

More of. See: **The Same**.

Most Important Election of Our Lifetimes. Whichever one is coming up.

Narrative. Every candidate must have one. If you lack a narrative, you are in big trouble mister. Better go to the library now.

Pain at the Pump. That pang you feel as soon as you pull into the Exxon station. Try Excedrin.

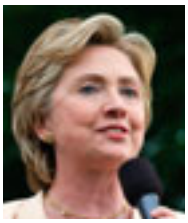
Politics of Fear. Practiced by those candidates—you know who you are—who insist on bringing up boring, nasty topics such as al Qaeda, nuclear proliferation, belligerent Russian dictators, winning or losing in Iraq, angry petro-populists, and ambitious autocratic powers. What a bunch of downers.

Privacy. As in, "That's John Edwards's private business."

President's Working Group on Financial Markets. We're not sure what this is either, but it is very, very important to Ron Paul.

Public Investment. Any spending favored by liberals.

Puma. A species of wildcat found throughout the Americas, typically large, with a tawny coat (not real fur).



Puma-in-chief

The Republican Brand. Damaged beyond repair. Consign with New Coke, Olestra, the McDLT, Zima, ValuJet, Phen-fen, Crystal Pepsi, and the Edsel.

Republican Rage. Appears every four years in the form of the "Angry White Male" and his assorted kin. Nothing is scarier than a bunch of middle-aged, overweight suburbanites. Republicans get together and they just start going CRAZY. They're hooting and hollering, booing people and ideas they disagree with, wearing silly clothes, etc. Really, they ought to know better.

Reagan. What would he do? He'd probably throw up his hands and move to China.

The Same. What McCain supporters want. No joke. Didn't you hear their chants at the Republican convention in St. Paul? "More of the Same! More of the Same!" See: **More of**.

Sisterhood. Crazed army of Hillary Clinton supporters. See: **Traveling Pantsuits**.

Small Towns. Municipalities in the "real America" where folks work hard, play by the rules, and practice responsibility, faith, thrift, and common sense. Naturally, 84 percent of Americans live elsewhere.

Transformational Figure. Obama. Unfortunately, he's going to transform the country into the Netherlands.

Traveling Pantsuits. Uniform worn by crazed army of Hillary Clinton supporters. See: **Sisterhood**.

What He Had to Do. What each candidate did during the debates. To be said authoritatively, in solemn tones, during post-debate commentary. For example, "They each did what they had to do, Wolf."

Yes We Can. Hope for the best. And prepare for the worst. ♦

The print edition of **THE WEEKLY STANDARD** is off for election week.

To make sure that you don't miss so much as a syllable of our up-to-the-minute election commentary from Bill Kristol, Fred Barnes, Stephen F. Hayes, Matthew Continetti, and all the rest of your favorite pundits, drop in regularly at **weeklystandard.com**.

Visit early and often!

the weekly Standard

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Eight Is Enough

Your election night guide to the swing states McCain needs to win. BY JEFFREY H. ANDERSON

As you settle in with your bowl of popcorn and drink to watch the quadrennial competition for America's highest office, you need a scorecard. You are eagerly anticipating seeing the national map light up in red and blue—a welcome reminder of our federalist design—but what should you be watching for? How will you know whether John McCain is doing well enough to have any shot of pulling off the upset?

There are only ten states that were decided by 5 percent or less in each of the last two presidential elections: Ohio, Nevada, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Minnesota, Oregon (yes, Oregon), Pennsylvania, Iowa, New Mexico, and Florida (which was decided by 5.01 percent in 2004 if you're nitpicking). Not surprisingly, these states will be important in 2008.

But it's not quite as simple as that. Mostly because of widespread dissatisfaction with President Bush, the political landscape has become more fertile for the Democratic party over the last four years. In addition, the Democrats, who have had a habit of nominating candidates with rather modest personal appeal (e.g., Walter Mondale, Michael Dukakis, John Kerry) are putting forward a candidate who draws 200,000 people to hear him speak. Sure it was in Berlin, but still . . . Whatever his genuine merits as a statesman, Barack Obama is clearly a more formidable candidate than John Kerry—and probably than Al Gore.

In light of these changed factors in 2008, it seems rather unlikely that Obama will *fail* to win any states that *either* Gore or Kerry succeeded in winning—let alone any that both men won. So where does that leave McCain? The good news for the Republican is that he doesn't need to win any states that Bush didn't win. The bad news is that he probably won't, and so he needs to win *all* of the states that Bush swept in the last two elections.

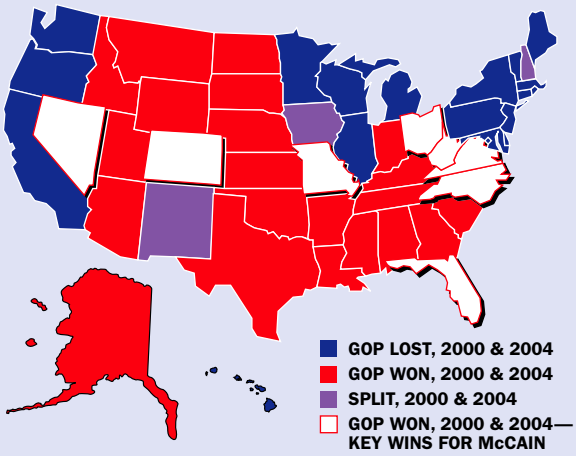
McCain needs to take Florida, Missouri, Colorado, Nevada, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, and, most dauntingly, Ohio. He needs to go 8-0 in these states—in addition to winning all of the other states that Bush swept (which he should). If one of those eight lights up for Obama on election night, it's lights out for McCain.

It'll be lights out, that is, unless McCain can somehow win a state that Bush didn't sweep in 2000 and 2004. This is a tall order. The most likely possibility would seem to be New Mexico, New Hampshire, or Wisconsin. Over the last two elections combined, Wisconsin was the closest state, with an average margin of victory of 0.3 percent, but it went to the Democrat each time. New Mexico,

Jeffrey H. Anderson is a former professor of American government at the Air Force Academy. His college football rankings are used in determining which teams will play in the BCS national championship game.

Can He Pull It Off?

McCain needs to win every state that Bush won twice, and the most difficult among these will be West Virginia, North Carolina, Missouri, Colorado, Virginia, Nevada, Florida, and Ohio—in roughly ascending order. (A surprise win elsewhere—with Wisconsin, New Mexico, and New Hampshire being the most likely candidates—could provide some margin for error.)



	BUSH MARGIN 2000	BUSH MARGIN 2004	POLLS CLOSE
Florida	+0.1%	+5.0%	7:00 P.M. EST*
Nevada	+3.5%	+2.6%	10:00 P.M. EST
Missouri	+3.3%	+7.2%	8:00 P.M. EST
Colorado	+8.4%	+4.7%	9:00 P.M. EST
Ohio	+3.5%	+2.1%	7:30 P.M. EST
West Virginia	+6.3%	+12.9%	7:30 P.M. EST
Virginia	+8.1%	+8.2%	7:00 P.M. EST
North Carolina	+12.8%	+12.4%	8:30 P.M. EST

*(Panhandle, 8 P.M. EST)

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which borders McCain's home state of Arizona, was the second closest, with an average margin of 0.4 percent, and Bush won it in 2004. New Hampshire, where McCain has twice done very well in GOP primaries, was decided by just 1.3 percent in each of the last two elections, with Bush winning in 2000 and Kerry in 2004. But if Obama does better nationally than Kerry or Gore did, which at this point looks like a near-certainty (especially as regards Kerry), then these states that were so tightly decided in the past two elections will likely swing his way. And polls currently suggest that Obama is doing even better in these three states than he is doing nationwide.

As for Pennsylvania, in the past dozen presidential elections, spanning half a century, the Democrats have always done better in Pennsylvania than they have done nationally—all 12 times. Yet, in the first five weeks after the Republican convention, the McCain-Palin ticket held as many events in Pennsylvania as they held in crucial Ohio, more than they held in equally crucial Florida, and more than they held in must-win Nevada, Virginia, North Carolina, and Missouri combined. Do they know something we don't?

So picking up a win in Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Wisconsin, or New Hampshire is a long-shot proposition; winning Oregon, Iowa, or Minnesota is even more so. So that brings us back to those states he must win, the eight states Bush swept but which are hotly contested in 2008: Florida, Missouri, Colorado, Nevada, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, and Ohio.

If McCain wins these eight states, along with the others he's expected to win more easily, but without pulling off any upsets in likely Obama territory—then that will give him 274 electoral votes, four more than needed. But there's no margin for error; each of these states is worth at least five electoral votes. Right now, polls show McCain to be down in nearly all eight, but generally doing quite a bit better in them than he is nationally. If he can pull to within 2 to 3 percentage points of Obama nationally, the Democratic leads in these states should more or less evaporate.

With such a national surge, McCain should win North Carolina and West Virginia, which Bush won in 2000 and 2004 by an average of 11.1 percentage points. He should also have a good shot in Missouri, Virginia, and Colorado, states that Bush won by an average of 6.6 percentage points—although Obama has been running very strongly in polls in those states, particularly the latter two. McCain also has a decent shot in Nevada, which also borders Arizona and which Bush won by an average of just over 3 percentage points.

That leaves Florida and Ohio, states that Bush won by an average of 2.5 to 3 percentage points. If McCain loses either, his prospects of winning the election will fall to just a few notches above the lottery ticket line. At the least, he'd then have to sweep Wisconsin, New Mexico, and New Hampshire—or win Minnesota or Oregon or Iowa in place of one of those three—or else win Pennsylvania. Bush went 3-11 in those seven states and didn't come within 2.5 percentage points of winning Pennsylvania either time. Let's just say it plainly: McCain must win both Florida and Ohio.

What if McCain were to go 7-1 in his eight key states, with the loss being in either Nevada or West Virginia? If he didn't pull off any upsets elsewhere, that would put him and Obama in a dead heat at 269 electoral votes and throw the election into the House of Representatives. The same result would occur if McCain were to lose Ohio but win Wisconsin and New Mexico.

Would it be too much to hope that, in spite of having supported Obama on the campaign trail, Bill or Hillary Clinton would then give a dramatic speech describing McCain as the lesser of two evils, thereby leading to a McCain presidency and a duel between one of the Clintons and Obama? Probably. ♦

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'Clean Hands and a Pure Heart'

The stature of John McCain.

BY DAVID GELERNTER

Americans have traditionally rated their statesmen's moral stature above all other accomplishments. "The truth is," says a foreigner to a Frenchman in Stendhal's classic of 1830 *Le Rouge et le Noir*, "that your aged society values conventionality above everything; you will never rise higher than martial gallantry; *vous aurez des Murat et jamais de Washington*." You will have Murats, but never a Washington. Murat was the brilliant, swaggering commander who eagerly accepted Napoleon's offer of the crown of Naples. Napoleon himself was the soldier of genius and enlightened thinker who crowned himself emperor in the cathedral of Paris. But George Washington was outraged at the suggestion that his victorious army should make him king. He chose instead to play a central role in the creation of modern democracy. American society has always been unconventional in its search for men of Washington's mold, who care less for power and glory than for freedom, democracy, and doing right.

John McCain's campaign has often been criticized for lacking a theme. It's a fair complaint as far as it goes, but overlooks one important fact: McCain's theme is himself. More than any candidate in recent decades, perhaps more than anyone since Dwight D. Eisenhower, McCain asks to be judged not as a talking white paper but as a man. Of course no candidate can advertise his own moral stature; he can use weak words like "maverick" and "I have been tested," but can't quite say "I stand before you as a hero of proven nobility." On the all-important question of moral stature, McCain's friends must speak for him. They have tried, but have come up short.

Before the debate season opened, Obama's own people spoke of the "stature gap" between the candidates and their plans for closing it. But a person's moral stature can't be altered by campaign slogans or debate performances; it is a measure of his life as a whole. Come the election you can smudge the facts but not change them. "The character issue" is a trivializing phrase that is often used to cut this great towering maple of a topic down to petunia-size. But two facts stand out and help explain why moral stature is so important to American voters.

John McCain's campaign has often been criticized for lacking a theme. It's a fair complaint as far as it goes, but overlooks one important fact: McCain's theme is himself. More than any candidate in recent decades, perhaps more than anyone since Dwight D. Eisenhower, McCain asks to be judged not as a talking white paper but as a man.

First, we elect a head of state to speak and act for the nation, not a mere plug-and-play prime minister to run the government. Second, the most important events of modern American history have been largely unforeseen—9/11 and the financial crisis; the rise of Solidarity in Poland, Khomeini in Iran, John Paul II in the Vatican; Russian missiles in Cuba, the Berlin wall, the Communist invasion of South Korea, Pearl Harbor. The nation needs a man it can rely on, not position papers it approves; when crises arise, the position papers are likely to be irrelevant.

Granting the importance of the topic, the difference in moral stature between presidential candidates has rarely been as enormous as it is today—not (or not only) because Obama's is so small but because McCain's is so large. There is no single English word for McCain the hero, the moral entity. But in Hebrew he would be called a *tsaddik*—a man of such nobility and moral substance that he approaches holiness. If this assertion sounds crazy, that only shows how little we have thought about the issue.

To be a *tsaddik* says nothing about your politics. One of the central fallacies of Obama-style left-liberalism is the belief that political attitudinizing is a replacement for personal virtue. If the left believed in beatitude or salvation, you would get there by sending money to the correct campaigns, casting the correct votes, hating the right people, and reading the *New York Times*, religiously.

So what makes McCain a *tsaddik*? Compare his life with Natan Sharansky's. Sharansky, the Russian Jew who spent 10 years as a political prisoner, is today one of Israel's leading statesmen and political thinkers. And he is a *tsaddik* beyond question, honored by the whole civilized world. His story is linked to America as well as Russia and Israel: President Reagan's unqualified denunciations of the Soviet Union inspired and sustained Sharansky and his fellow political prisoners, and Sharansky called Reagan "the key figure in our struggle, the struggle of all people fighting against tyranny."

The resemblances between McCain and Sharansky are obvious. Sharan-

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sky, who helped found the Moscow Helsinki Watch group in 1976, made a rule in prison of defying Soviet and KGB authority in every way he could—although the consequence could only be crueler treatment in Gulag hell. John McCain volunteered to serve his country as a naval flier, was shot down over North Vietnam in 1967 and imprisoned until 1973. He was badly wounded when he was brought down and captured, and has never fully recovered. He was in constant pain, losing strength and approaching death when North Vietnam offered him immediate release in 1968, on account of his father's high command in the U.S. military. His release out of turn, as a favored son of the military elite, would have been a propaganda triumph for Hanoi. So McCain refused. Then the serious torture began.

Two prisoners of brutal Communist regimes who chose to suffer for their principles and for love of country. Easily said but not easily grasped. Both men went on to become "maverick" politicians in the nations they loved. Who wins? Sharansky's was the more sustained and world-changing act of heroism. But comparisons at this level are meaningless. In moral stature they are both in a class that few men even aspire to, much less achieve. Both are great hearts, and *tsaddikim*.

McCain has continued to live the life of a stubborn *tsaddik*, personally and politically. In 1993 the McCains adopted a child from Mother Teresa's orphanage in Bangladesh and proceeded not to talk about it. McCain is only a part-time conservative and has never inspired enthusiasm on the right; but no one doubts that each of his leftward excursions has been a matter of principle and not convenience. His outspoken, unwavering support for Israel in the face of American Jewish indifference is a perfect example of principled versus self-interested politics. His positions on soft money and campaign financing, and the stiff conflict-of-interest rules that have excluded so many experienced political operatives from his campaign staff, have hurt him badly—but not defeated him. He is not easily defeated.

Obama's campaign, on the other hand, shows symptoms of the left's unwillingness to deal seriously with moral problems. Obama often seems to confuse America's moral stature with its popularity. He talks about restoring America to the world's esteem—but who needs the world's esteem? Why is today's "global community" (or Western community) qualified to pass judgment on America? Obama won't say. He consistently ignores the moral significance of the blood and energy we have spent in Afghanistan and Iraq, not only to fight terrorism, not at all to install comfortable pro-American autocracies, but to help third-world peoples create democracy. And can anyone, left or right, imagine McCain listening to a sermon viciously slandering his country (or slandering anything he loved and honored) and quietly keeping his seat?

"Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart" (Psalm 24:3-4). Whether you like or dislike his politics, that is John McCain all over. If he wins this election, it will be a come-from-behind surprise. But in larger American terms, it will be no surprise at all. ♦

How to Woo a Warrior

The National Guard, now showing at the multiplex. BY JUSTIN SHUBOW

Now airing in theaters before the coming attractions, "American Warrior" is a stunningly unorthodox commercial for the U.S. National Guard. Directed by Academy Award-winner James Mangold, the two-minute-and-35-second music video combines a kick-ass song by Kid Rock with visuals that cut between the rock star in concert, Dale Earnhardt Jr. braving danger in a stock-car race, and guardsmen deployed at home and abroad. The ad, which is running on 27,000 screens through October, serves as a model example of how to advertise the military during a controversial war.

Right from the get-go, the ad shows zero tolerance for naysayers. The muscular opening lyric alludes to and brushes aside any doubts about the war in Iraq: *So don't tell me who's wrong and right / when liberty starts slippin' away / And if you ain't gonna fight / get out of the way.*

Even more boldly, the video does not shrink from the fact that a guardsman might be deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan; it shows soldiers in what is clearly a Middle Eastern country. This is a marked improvement over "Citizen/Soldier," a cinematic National Guard ad from 2007 that portrayed combat soldiers primarily in the Revolutionary War and World War II. "American Warrior" perhaps takes its forthrightness to an extreme when Kid Rock solemnly sings, "I'm giving all myself," which could easily refer to sacrificing one's life.

But the ad's most astonishing moment occurs when an American Humvee accidentally nearly

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kills a young Muslim boy who has run into the street. Could this be the first military recruiting effort to admit the potential for unintended civilian casualties? The surprising realism is enhanced by a reference to the military's newfound attention to cultural sensitivity. Not only does a soldier kick a soccer ball to the frightened boy, but the American takes off his sunglasses before doing so. This follows the military's current guidelines, which recommend that when dealing with civilians, soldiers remove their dark eyewear so as to appear less threatening.

Despite these touches, the ad is anything but a "We Are the World" paean to peacekeepers. Its footage includes locust-like helicopters swarming in from above, heavily armed vehicles barreling through a village, and even a battlefield explosion. Still fiercer are the vocals, with Kid Rock repeatedly screaming the word "warrior." And the second verse boasts of being "*ready to deploy, engage, and destroy*," the syllables of which are syncopated for maximum force.

Thanks to such assaultive sounds and imagery, the video almost seems more fitting for the Marines than the National Guard, whose ads have traditionally played up the softer side of the service, such as helping one's neighbors and building character. A typical 2007 National Guard TV commercial, for instance, emphasized "country, community, family" and prominently featured women guardsmen. The "American Warrior" ad, by contrast, is aimed solely at young men, the sort who might be open to the idea that war is the proving ground for manliness. Indeed, only one woman soldier appears in the video—and she is barely recognizable as female.

Kid Rock, National Guard recruiter

By contrast, a recent "Army Strong" commercial actually shows a female soldier being pulled over an obstacle wall by other soldiers—a depiction of the very feminization of the military bemoaned by Stephanie Gutmann's *The Kinder, Gentler Military*, which reported that, after too many women failed to climb the obstacle wall unassisted, the Army eliminated that training requirement.

As for aiding in retention and morale, the lyrical and musical ferocity of "American Warrior," together with its emphasis on loyalty (soldiers are shown rescuing their buddy, whom they would "*never leave . . . behind*"), ought to shore up the self-image of troops currently serving in the combat arena. Psychological studies from World War II onward have shown that soldiers fight less for a cause than for their brothers in arms. And, needless to say, guardsmen on patrol in Falluja do not picture themselves primarily as irenic do-gooders; unlike guardsmen who merely provide aid during natural disasters at home, they are definitely warfighters first. Also, given that U.S. soldiers routinely fire themselves up before dangerous missions by listening to aggressive music, it is almost a sure thing that "American Warrior" will be used for this very purpose in Iraq and Afghanistan. If comments on blog posts are a good indication, troops are overwhelmingly gung-ho about the song.

Another noteworthy feature of "American Warrior" is the way it savvily targets red staters. Earnhardt is a hero to NASCAR fans, while Kid Rock, who hails from small-town Michigan, is famous for his impudent white-trash persona. The song itself was created by adding all new lyrics to the grinding southern riffs of Kid Rock's "Jackson, Mississippi," the opening line of which is sung in country-style harmony. That the ad is oriented toward the heartland reflects the fact that the military has for quite some time been disproportionately southern in its makeup—a phenomenon that can be attributed in large part to the long-standing importance of honor in the region, a value that blue staters often fail to comprehend.

By offering red-blooded males a blunt message of certitude with attitude, one that combines idealism with realism, the video's creators have produced a spot that shines by comparison with the Army's numerous marketing missteps—from the self-help "Be All That You Can Be" to the hyper-individualistic "Army of One" to the caveman-like solecism "Army Strong." Unlike all of these, "American Warrior" hits its marks with the precision and power of a laser-guided bomb. ♦

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From Little ACORNs, Big Scandals Grow

Barack Obama: torn between two models of community organizing

By Charlotte Allen

The in-your-face Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) is currently being investigated for voter-registration fraud in 13 states. ACORN is often referred to as the spawn of Saul Alinsky (1909-72), the godfather of radical community organizers, whose most famous aphorism was "Keep the pressure on." ACORN's founders certainly had Alinsky's principles in mind when they founded the organization in 1970.

There is a web of connections between Alinsky, ACORN, and the Democratic presidential nominee, Barack Obama. From 1985 to 1988, Obama worked for the Developing Communities Project, a church-based consortium operated by several Alinsky disciples on Chicago's poverty-plagued South Side. The DCP was imbued with Alinsky's philosophy of helping poor people band together at the grassroots level to confront a city government that frequently neglected them. (Obama contributed to the anthology *After Alinsky: Community Organizing in Illinois*, touting the "impressive results" his Alinsky-inspired project had achieved.) Just before he left Chicago for Harvard Law School, Obama also went through training with the organization Alinsky founded in 1940, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), and which carries on his legacy today.

Saul Alinsky in 1968

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Back in Chicago in the early 1990s, Obama represented ACORN in a voter-registration suit and directed a voter-registration drive for an ACORN affiliate, Project Vote. He sat on the board of the Chicago-based Woods Foundation that made hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of grants to Project Vote and (according to a report published in an ACORN journal in 2004) ran a session on power as part of ACORN's annual leadership training sessions for several years before his first run for public office in 1996.

To hear it from people connected to IAF, though, Obama took an unfortunate turn when he linked himself to ACORN, whose activist shenanigans would have Alinsky spinning in his grave. These range from allegedly procuring thousands of phony and multiple signatures on voter registration lists (one 19-year-old in Cleveland claimed to have been bribed with cash and cigarettes to register 72 times over 18 months) to using taxpayer funds to strong-arm mortgage companies into lending to the un-creditworthy, helping precipitate the current financial meltdown.

"Shakedowns" and "blackmail" were the words used by IAF's director, Edward Chambers, a protégé of Alinsky, about ACORN and its activities when I called the IAF's Chicago headquarters (IAF today trains organizers in a loose network of some 57 affiliates in 21 states). It was the day before the *New York Times* published a story about a June 18 internal report by an ACORN lawyer which contained a laundry list of "potentially improper use of charitable dollars for political purposes; money transfers among [ACORN's 174 affiliates, some of them tax-exempt, others not], and potential conflicts created by employees working for multiple affiliates," as *Times* reporter Stephanie Strom put it.

One area of potential impropriety detailed in Strom's story is the relationship between Project Vote, registered as a tax-exempt charity with the Internal Revenue Service since 1994 and thus barred from engaging in partisan political activities, and ACORN itself, a membership organization incorporated under Louisiana law that is nonprofit but not tax-exempt and is thus free to be as par-

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tisan as it wants. ACORN's political action committee, for example, endorsed Obama in February, and the Obama campaign in turn paid an ACORN consulting affiliate, Citizens Services Inc., more than $832,000 for its work in helping Obama beat Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primaries.

ACORN has a contract with Project Vote to conduct voter-registration drives using ACORN employees, who initially claimed to have signed up 1.3 million new voters at a cost of $16 million, then lowered that figure to around 450,000 (according to an October 23 *New York Times* story) after eliminating fraudulent registrations, duplicates, and incomplete forms. The internal report, by Washington lawyer Elizabeth Kingsley, pointed out that until very recently, Project Vote's executive director, Zach Pollett, was also ACORN's political director. (Pollett resigned from Project Vote in July but continues to work for the charity as a consultant via another ACORN affiliate.) Furthermore, the report noted, Project Vote has had only one independent director (who served only briefly) throughout its entire tax-exempt history. The rest of the board has consisted entirely of ACORN staffers plus two dues-paying ACORN members. Some of them told Strom they had no idea they were on the Project Vote board, which, like the boards of many ACORN affiliates, met seldom, if ever, and failed to keep minutes.

For eight years, ACORN's top management concealed from both the board and law-enforcement authorities the fact that the founder's brother had not only embezzled $1 million but still had a job at the organization.

The potential for abuse in an interlocking arrangement governed top-down from New Orleans is as obvious as a thicket of "Change" signs at an Obama rally. ACORN's using Project Vote to trawl for voters for ACORN-backed candidates—such as, um, Barack Obama—would be a clear violation of the IRS's ban on partisan activity by a charity, as Kingsley noted in her report. Strom pointed out that ACORN is already facing demands for back taxes from the IRS and "various state tax authorities."

ACORN is secretive about its financial condition, which, because it is not tax-exempt, it has no legal obligation to make public. When I called ACORN's New Orleans headquarters to ask about its funding arrangements, its press spokesman, Charles Jackson, refused to answer my questions unless I put them in writing, and after I did via email, Jackson was not heard from again. The *New York Times* in a 2006 article, however, stated that ACORN's budget for that year, not counting its research spinoff and the ACORN Housing Corporation, another tax-exempt charity among ACORN's affiliates, amounted to $37.5 million. Only $3 million of that came from the claimed 500,000 ACORN members' dues, according to the *Times* story, with the rest rolling in from foundations, private donations, and arrangements called "partnerships" in which corporate targets of ACORN activism, such as the Household Financial Corporation (one of ACORN's focuses is "predatory lending") pay money to ACORN for the organization to operate, say, loan-counseling programs.

A *Wall Street Journal* article published on July 31 noted an additional source of ACORN funding: U.S. taxpayers. *Journal* reporters Elizabeth Williamson and Brody Mullins analyzed the IRS filings of the tax-exempt ACORN Housing Corporation for 2007 and noted that some 36 percent of the funds raised by the housing affiliate last year—$2.8 million out of $7.7 million—came from the federal government, mostly in the form of grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. (According to an October 14 editorial in the *Wall Street Journal*, that represented only a small part of the estimated $16 million in federal grant dollars that various ACORN affiliates bearing names such as American Institute for Social Justice and American Environmental Justice Project took in from 1997 through 2007.) Wade Rathke, ACORN's founder and, until this past summer, CEO, writing on his blog "Chief Organizer" on June 18, the very date of Kingsley's critical report, estimated that ACORN's total budget for 2008, counting all affiliates, would likely be a record $110 million.

Rathke was forced out of his job at around the same time he posted his optimistic budget projection because of another eyebrow-raising matter raised in Kingsley's report: the way ACORN hushed up the embezzlement of nearly $1 million from the organization by Rathke's brother Dale, who headed an ACORN affiliate that provides financial-management and accounting services to other ACORN units. The theft occurred in 2000, but ACORN's top management concealed it from both the board and law-enforcement authorities until this past May, when word leaked out at a meeting of ACORN organizers. Dale Rathke had even been allowed to keep working for ACORN, although at a reduced salary and in the lesser capacity of his brother's assistant, while the Rathke

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family agreed to pay back the organization at the rate of $30,000 a year (in other words, over 30-plus years).

The Rathkes were permanent fixtures at ACORN. Wade Rathke had cut his teeth in radical activism in 1967, when he helped George Wiley found the National Welfare Rights Organization, a quintessential 1960s group that mobilized hordes of welfare mothers to invade benefits offices with lists of demands. (Melees involving overturned desks, and broken glass often resulted from these encounters.) The movement failed to impress the general public, and the National Welfare Rights Organization went bankrupt in 1975. Meanwhile, Wade Rathke had founded ACORN and soon brought his brother on board.

Once the ACORN embezzlement became public in May, however, along with the news that the Rathkes, thanks to the snail's-pace terms of their restitution agreement, had reimbursed ACORN for only $210,000 out of the $948,000 stolen eight years ago, Dale Rathke was finally fired and Wade Rathke obliged to resign, although he continues to hold the title of chief organizer for ACORN International, yet another entity on the seemingly endless list of ACORN affiliates. Even here, Kingsley's report revealed that the version of the embezzlement that ACORN gave out to the public this past summer differed from what her perusal of internal ACORN documents revealed. On July 8, according to the *Times*, ACORN's new top executive, Bertha Lewis, had said that 90 percent of the money had come from ACORN itself and the remainder from its charity affiliates. In fact, Kingsley found, $215,000 had been charged to an American Express card paid by an ACORN pension fund that later wrote off the amount as a gift to ACORN in possible violation of federal pension-fund regulations. According to a recent article in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, the embezzlement scandal cost ACORN, already encumbered with debt and tax problems, grants from some of its key funding foundations, and the organization has had to close several offices and lay off employees. (A friend of Wade Rathke has eased the cash-flow crisis somewhat by paying off the $738,000 the Rathkes still owed in restitution, according to the *Chronicle*.)

As for ACORN's protest tactics, the kind that have netted it decades' worth of counseling contracts and other cash handouts from corporations and municipalities, they indeed seem to fall into the category of "shakedowns." The 2006 *New York Times* article was about a cadre of utility customers wearing red ACORN T-shirts who descended on the Gary office of the Northern Indiana Public Service Company to pay their heating bills out of bagfuls of pennies. The aim was to force the utility, via hours of tedious coin-counting and unpleasant media coverage, to drop delinquency penalties for tardy bill-payers with hard-luck stories. A company spokesman pointed out that the utility already had an assistance program in place for poor people unable to pay for heat and said the ACORN tactics amounted to "bullying."

Freddie Johnson, 19, being interviewed in Cleveland on October 13, said he was paid by ACORN solicitors to sign 72 voter registration forms over a five-month period.

AP PHOTO / THE PLAIN DEALER, MARVIN FONG

Nonetheless, such stunts, which seem to come straight from the yellowed pages of Tom Wolfe's send-up of 1960s radical activism, "Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers," are remarkably effective even nearly 40 years after the Sixties officially ended. Corporate executives, bureaucratic lifers, and foundation grant-processors alike seem either cowed or impressed by such tactics as protesting a bankers' dinner with inflated rubber sharks, piling garbage in front of city hall, or yelling profanities at a mayor's wife and children. All of these were part of a prolonged ACORN protest in Baltimore a few years ago that, according to Sol Stern of the Manhattan Institute's *City Journal*, were the

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likely source of an annual $50,000 payout from the city to ACORN for providing housing counseling to the poor. On the very eve of the collapse of Wachovia Bank this September—done in by its fatal investments in home-mortgage instruments that the ACORN watchdog Consumers Rights League says were pushed by ACORN itself through its taxpayer-subsidized housing affiliate—ACORN was busy trying to mau-mau Wachovia into rewriting the terms of those swiftly defaulting loans by portraying the bank to the media as a piranha lender.

The IAF's Edward Chambers told me that scarcely any act in ACORN's three-ring circus of urban radicalism would have met with the approval of Alinsky, the man whose ideas supposedly underlie the rubber sharks and sacks of pennies. "They take other people's money instead of raising it from the people they're organizing," said Chambers. "They take federal money, money from foundations, and it corrupts them." The IAF insists that any organization that wants to affiliate with IAF—and benefit from IAF's training—come up with its own money, money voluntarily donated by people who believe in the group's causes so fervently that they are willing to dip into their own pockets to pay for it. "We work a lot with churches, with unions," said Chambers. "They hire their own organizers, and they hold them accountable. And we never endorse political candidates."

Long before Harvard, Obama was disillusioned with the tedium and apparent pointlessness of community organizing, and the career in politics that law school would make possible offered him charisma, power, and glory.

Indeed Alinsky himself was a far more complex and idiosyncratic figure than either his disciples or his ideological opponents (who assume that his last book, *Rules for Radicals*, published in 1971, was all about turning yourself into another Abbie Hoffman) typically admit. Alinsky, a self-styled radical who studied at the University of Chicago and began his professional career as a union organizer, was widely accused of being a Communist, but was in fact vehemently anti-Communist. Later on, during the 1960s, he was as much a foe of Lyndon Johnson's big-spending War on Poverty as he was of conservatives. He also detested the 1960s New Left for its antinomian cultural hedonism and its insistence on smashing the "system," as they termed it. Alinsky believed genuine radicals ought to work within for change. "Alinsky believed that the liberal welfare state led to dependency, and that people should stand up for themselves and have the confidence to assert their own interests," said Peter Skerry, a political scientist at Boston College.

Alinsky's self-selected territory as a community organizer during the 1940s was Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood, then a working-class slum abutting the city's stockyards and peopled with ethnic Poles, Lithuanians, and Slovaks. They might have felt marginalized economically (many worked low-grade jobs in the meat-packing industry) but they remained deeply conservative socially. Most were devout Catholics, and, in order to organize them to demand better municipal services, Alinsky allied himself with Bishop Bernard Sheil and the Catholic labor organizer Joe Meegan. Later, during the 1950s, as Chicago's meat-packing clout declined and its Eastern European ethnics moved elsewhere, Alinsky turned his attention to working-class blacks who were also socially conservative and church-oriented. Although confrontation with the prevailing establishment was a key component of Alinsky's efforts to turn lower-class communities into effective power blocs, he had little interest in class struggle. If a movie analogy is apt, Alinsky's ethos of activism was more *On the Waterfront* than *Salt of the Earth*.

Alinsky's legacy organization, the IAF, has continued his practices: working with churches, trying to shore up families and other traditional institutions, and insisting on fiscal independence. They have also worked to sand down the edges of the founder's harsh style to reposition the IAF as a service organization focused on training community organizers rather than provocation. "When I was on the board, I heard more criticism of Saul Alinsky than anything else," recalled Jean Bethke Elshtain, a philosopher at the University of Chicago's divinity school, and a political centrist and prolific writer associated with the "communitarian" movement of the 1980s and 1990s, who until recently served on IAF's board of trustees. Elshtain, whom Chambers personally recruited to serve as an IAF trustee, said she had been drawn to the IAF precisely because of its commitment to "shoring up families and schools and personal responsibility."

Because the IAF insists that its affiliates rely on grassroots contributions, not outside grants, its projects tend to be strictly local and relatively small-bore, centered around liberal Protestant and Catholic churches and their members. One of the most successful has been the Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS), a consortium of churches, founded in San Antonio, Texas, in 1974. COPS, the brainchild of the IAF-trained Ernesto Cortes Jr., is credited with giving political clout to San Antonio's Mexican-Americans, who had lived in the city for decades but who had enjoyed little power under the city's Anglo

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majority. Another successful IAF project is the Nehemiah Houses, which over the past 20 years has built nearly 4,000 moderate-income homes on once-desolate parcels of city-owned land in New York City. Nehemiah requires its buyers to demonstrate their commitment to home-ownership via modest but not negligible down payments, and so its projects have generally escaped the foreclosure blight that easier borrowing has brought to other low-income neighborhoods in recent years.

Some IAF undertakings, such as a successful 1994 effort to have the city of Baltimore hire only contractors who paid their employees a higher-than-minimum "living wage"—a cause later picked up by ACORN in other cities—aren't likely to appeal to free-market conservatives who believe that the net effect of such measures is to increase unemployment by eliminating low-wage entry level jobs. Still, the IAF's organizational emphasis on personal responsibility and commitment cannot help but resonate. "Alinsky never tried to organize the really poor; he never tried to organize welfare mothers, who are pretty hard to organize, as you might imagine; he always focused on people who had a little but wanted more," said Skerry, whose 1993 *Mexican Americans, the Ambivalent Minority* told the story of Cortes and COPS.

On the picket line at the Chicago Stockyards in 1946: Saul Alinsky, Joe Meegan, Father Ambrose Andrak, Father Edward Plawinski, Sig Wlodraczyk, and an unidentified picket captain.

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Since the allegations of voter-registration scams surfaced in the media in September, ACORN has taken pains to distract public attention from both itself (its website blames "the right wing noise machine" for its troubles) and its connections to Obama. The effort at distancing has undoubtedly been eased by the soft spot in the hearts of many journalists for any left-of-center organization that claims to promote "social change." Pablo Eisenberg of the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* covered the Rathke embezzlement and wrung his hands over the fact that ACORN's "impressive group of smart, dedicated, and hard-working change agents" had gone wrong.

The question remains as to why Obama chose to forge close links with ACORN during the 1990s, when its rock-throwing style of community organizing had been a matter of public record for decades. After all, he could easily have returned to the lower-key, more centrist IAF. Not long before enrolling at Harvard Law School in 1988, Obama underwent IAF's standard eight-day training session for organizers. "I was very impressed by him," Chambers told me. "I told him that once he finished his schooling, to get back in touch with us. But he never did get back to us."

In a September 10 article in the *New Republic*, John Judis described what he called the "myth" that Obama had created about the centrality of community organizing to his political philosophy. Judis quoted a primary stump speech of Obama's declaring that community organizing was "the best education I ever had, better than anything I got at Harvard Law School" and implying that politics was for him simply community organizing by different means. The reality, noted Judis, after interviewing Obama's mentor during the mid-1980s—the Alinsky disciple Jerry Kellman—was that Obama had long before Harvard become disillusioned with the tedium and apparent pointlessness of trying to get toilets fixed in South Side housing projects when a career in politics that law school would make possible offered him charisma, power, and glory. Power, glory—and plenty of publicity—were also ACORN's goals and its forte.

It is not surprising that, as soon as the ink dried on Obama's Harvard degree, the future U.S. senator forgot all about Saul Alinsky and what he stood for in order to link himself to a charisma-craving group that, at least right now, seems to be giving community organizing a bad name. ♦

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Iceland Melts Down

A subprime borrower defaults in Orlando, and a Pole buys a used car in Reykjavik.

By Jonathan V. Last

Reykjavik

On October 6, Iceland's prime minister, Geir Haarde, claimed his country was on the verge of "national bankruptcy." Over the following days, the government was forced to nationalize the three big Icelandic banks. The stock market crashed, and the krona became so devalued that trading was halted. Members of the Icelandic government were placed under police protection for the first time in the nation's history. Various English-language press reports suggested that food shortages were days away. The Icelandic government undertook formal negotiations for a bailout with Russia, speculation being that the Russians would want the abandoned U.S. airbase at Keflavik in return. Iceland, it seemed, was on its way to becoming a frozen banana republic.

The reality is somewhat less hysterical. Icelanders continue to work and drive and, to a lesser degree, shop. The grocery stores are fully stocked. Offering greenbacks to merchants doesn't trigger any under-the-table discounts. The Icelandic government, having previously said it had secured a loan from Russia (it hadn't), last Monday leaked word that it had coordinated a $6 billion loan with the IMF, Norway, Sweden, and Japan. That loan never materialized and on Friday, Haarde announced that the government would begin negotiations with the IMF for $2 billion in immediate aid—leaving Russia's generosity blessedly untouched.

The fact that Iceland has not gone literally bankrupt, however, is the end of the good news. The financial crisis that began with mortgage defaults in California and Florida has wreaked havoc in the North Atlantic. And the worst is yet to come.

Before October, Iceland was an economic Cinderella story with sustained annual growth of 4 percent and the fifth highest per capita GDP in the world. The OMX Iceland 15, their version of the Dow, stood slightly off its historic highs of 2007. The engine of this success was the country's banks, whose privatization was completed in 2000. The three banks—Glitnir, Landsbanki, and Kaupthing—embarked on a course of aggressive foreign expansion, gathering overseas investors attracted by Iceland's high interest rates. The combination of the krona's strength (in 2007, the *Economist* estimated that the krona was the most overvalued currency in the world—by 131 percent) and the Icelandic central bank's high interest rates (which peaked at 15.5 percent) made saving in Internet accounts, such as Landsbanki's "Icesave" program, particularly attractive to Europeans. Three-hundred thousand Britons socked away £4.6 billion ($7.8 billion) in Icesave alone. For a sense of scale, Iceland has a population of 304,000 and a total annual GDP of $20 billion.

Iceland's banks were not particularly risky constructions. They were not weighted down by the subprime-debt packages—excuse me, structured investment vehicles—which caused so much trouble in America. But their reliance on foreign investment left them dangerously exposed to disruptions in the credit markets. When the markets seized up in late September, Iceland's banks were unable to secure loans to meet their short-term debts. It was a difficult and perilous moment. Iceland's leaders made the situation worse.

When Glitnir faltered first, in late September, it approached the Sedlabanki, Iceland's central bank, for a short-term loan. The head of the central bank, David Oddsson, is a politician with no background in economics. He was mayor of Reykjavik and then prime minister from 1991–2004. Oddsson reacted to the situation like a politician: He declined to bail out Glitnir and pushed for aggressive nationalization.

As Richard Porkes explained in the *Financial Times*, "This triggered a sovereign debt downgrade and a sharp further fall in the already depreciated krona. Short-run funding for Glitnir and Landsbanki evaporated, margin calls came from the European Central Bank, loan covenants kicked in."

Because of all this, Landsbanki failed a week later. The government nationalized it, too. But Oddsson wasn't finished. In another political maneuver, he intimated

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At the high-end Hagkaupf supermarket, lines are shorter than at the no-frills Bonus.

ARNALDUR HALLDORSSON / BLOOMBERG NEWS / LANDOV

that the Icelandic banks might not be able to pay their U.K. investors. This prompted Gordon Brown to lock-down Icelandic assets in the U.K.—using a provision originally crafted as part of a post-9/11 anti-terror statute. Brown wasn't about to abandon constituents who were losing their savings. The seizure killed Kaupthing, the one bank which still had life in it. The government took it over the next day. Suddenly, the Icelandic government was holding $61 billion of bank debt—roughly 8 times the national budget.

In the span of ten days, Oddsson had turned a crisis into a disaster, but the rest of the government didn't exactly cover itself in glory. The administration engaged in stunt casting, putting women in charge of two of the re-formed banks and playing gender politics: "Now the women are taking over," said one government official. "It's typical, the men make the mess and the women come in to clean it up."

Prime Minister Haarde waged an unhelpful war of words with Brown and publicly belittled the IMF, saying that he would not seek its help, but might consider a plan if they wanted to offer one. "The question," he sniffed, "is what kind of program [the IMF] would envisage for an advanced economy like ours. . . . I wouldn't expect them to put conditions like they do in third world countries or underdeveloped economies in this situation."

While Haarde postured, the Icelandic stock market collapsed. At its height in 2007, the OMX Iceland 15 was trading at 9,000 points. In the midst of the crisis, trading was halted for three days. When the market reopened on October 14, it plunged 77 percent in a single day, settling at 678.40.

In the midst of the turmoil, there was a run on the krona as Icelanders and investors tried desperately to trade the falling currency for harder cash. Sale of the krona was halted on currency markets. Oddsson stepped in again, attempting to peg it at a rate of 131 krona per euro. Since the central bank had only 4.5 billion euros in foreign currency reserves, the gaudy peg was doomed from the start. Forty-eight hours later, it went down. The krona, which had been trading at 122 in September before the crisis began, was at 340 when the collapse of Kaupthing brought currency trading to a permanent halt.

In a final act of economic malpractice, Oddsson cut the central bank's interest rate from 15.5 percent to 12 percent, a move which had no practical effect except to

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announce that Iceland was resigned to high inflation. Already, the inflation rate was ripping along at 14 percent. Icelandic economists predict that 25 percent is the best-case scenario in the near term, while their models suggest it could hit 75 percent in the worst-case.

Iceland's financial crisis had become an economic crisis. Three weeks in, the effects are visible. While the krona is off the currency markets, all banking is run through the central bank, putting a premium on foreign coin. Foreigners cannot trade in their kronas. Icelanders can only exchange krona for other currencies if they can prove they are about to travel abroad.

Every day the Icelandic government auctions off 25 million euros, which are prioritized for the import of "necessary" goods—food, medicine, and gas. This has prevented shortages of essentials, but rationing is occurring subtly. For instance, Geir Matthiasson, a professor of economics at the University of Iceland, notes that hospitals are prescribing smaller amounts of drugs and requiring more frequent refills in order to maximize the reserves of medicines on hand.

Shoppers are few and far between in Reykjavik.

Importers of nonessential goods are out of luck. Where foreign suppliers used to do business with Iceland on 30-, 60-, or even 90-day lines of credit, they now demand non-krona cash in advance. Businesses that rely on nonessential imports—which is almost all of them—have only the stocks they had at the end of September. Laura Petursdottir, who runs an upscale bath and body store, says she hasn't received new shipments in six weeks and is worried that she won't have stock for the Christmas season. Not that Icelanders would likely be able to afford her wares, anyway. The combination of inflation and contraction has already reached into every sector of the economy.

Carola Falk manages a shop that sells Icelandic handknit sweaters—which is like winning the lottery: The only two materials she needs are sheep and old Icelandic ladies, both of which remain in strong supply on the island. But Falk points out that the supply of goods is immaterial, since no one can afford to buy them. Inflation is already running so high that she sees the prices of everyday goods change weekly, and in some cases daily. "The sandwich I buy for lunch across the street was 220 krona last week," she says. "Now it's 280 krona."

At Kringlan, the main shopping mall, you can walk past four or five stores in a row without seeing a shopper. Sigurjon Orn Thorsson, the mall's general manager, says that the number of visits remains roughly constant, but that spending is off sharply from a year ago. Thorsson also sees a shift in where shoppers are spending their money: high-end is out. For instance, the mall has two grocery stores. When I visited on a weekday afternoon, the big, fancy Hagkaupf—think Whole Foods—was almost empty. The no-frills Bonus—a Nordic Dollar General—had every checkout lane open and packed ten-deep with customers. The same is true of clothing. Kringlan's many designer boutiques were deserted. A store called Next, which sells discounted, off-label clothes, was humming. One item doing brisk business elsewhere in the mall was an anti-Oddsson T-shirt.

In the big-ticket capital sector, the outlook is positively macabre. Construction has ground to a halt as builders find themselves strapped. Most of the construction workers in Iceland are Polish immigrants. They are leaving by the boatload, either laid off or finding Icelandic wages now lower than what they can make at home. The result is that construction sites around the city are closed or being operated by skeleton crews.

Or consider auto sales. Knutur Hauksson is president of Hekla, Iceland's biggest car dealership. "This is just the beginning," he says. "The worst is yet to come."

Hauksson buys his vehicles in euros. Since January the krona has declined 64 percent against the euro, so he's raised vehicle prices by 25 to 30 percent. In 2007, Hekla sold 9,000 vehicles, used and new. As of August, sales were off 68 percent year-on-year. But even that

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doesn't give an accurate picture of present reality. Asked how many vehicles he's sold recently, Hauksson laughs. "We sold six new cars last week—which was 30 percent of sales in all of Iceland. This week will probably be zero." Hauksson is trying to ship as much of his stock as possible back to Europe.

In an odd twist, there has emerged a small market for used cars. Polish immigrants leaving Iceland are buying them. Since they can't convert their savings out of kronas and kronas are worthless outside of Iceland, they're converting their money into cars—four-wheeled investment vehicles, if you will—and shipping them home.

Nearly every industry is being crunched. In the midst of the crisis, the country's two biggest newspapers merged as ad sales evaporated overnight. The bankrupt banks laid off 500 white-collar workers. This might not sound like much, but Iceland has traditionally had very low unemployment: In 2007, the country had 1,476 unemployed people, or 0.9 percent of the workforce. Even before the crisis, that number had jumped 50 percent. No one knows how high it will be by the end of the year.

More unemployed means more government expenditures in benefits. (Not to mention the money the government will need to put aside to pay back the IMF loan.) And government revenues will be down. The banks alone contributed $330 million to the government's coffers last year; this year that number will be closer to $110 million. The government's total budget in 2007 was $8.6 billion. In toto, Geir Matthiasson predicts "a decline as bad as 10 percent of GDP next year."

Another Icelandic economist, Gylfi Magnusson, is more optimistic: "There's certainly going to be a real contraction with unemployment. GDP will almost surely fall a bit, but it shouldn't collapse. The job market will obviously be quite bleak." Year-on-year real wages were down 2.5 percent before the crisis hit and will drop much further. There will be higher taxes on fewer jobs paying less money.

Which brings us back to the individual consumer. Hauksson explains, "We've seen the banks fail. In the next few weeks, some of the companies will go down. And then the personal bankruptcies will begin." In an attempt to escape Iceland's high interest rates, many Icelanders took out foreign currency loans for cars and mortgages. With the krona collapse, those loans have increased by 50 to 80 percent. When it comes to home mortgages, even Icelanders who took out krona-based loans are in trouble. As Eyglo Svala Arnarsdottir, an editor at *Iceland Review*, told me, traditional krona-based mortgages are indexed to inflation—meaning that principal is now increasing faster than it can be paid off.

Foreclosures will follow, unless the government prohibits them. There is already a surplus of 2,000 to 3,000 flats, which, combined with out-migration, foreclosures, and, of course, inflation, means you have a housing market headed for trouble, too.

With the collapse of the krona, the cost of foreign-currency loans for cars and mortgages has increased by 50 to 80 percent. Before long, personal bankruptcies will begin to mount.

Icelanders vary in their outlook. Everyone here assumes the krona will soon be stabilized and traded at a "reasonable" rate, meaning that businesses will be able to import goods again. Prime Minister Haarde told Icelanders that they're in for a rough few weeks, but that the situation will improve. Finnur Oddsson, managing director of the Icelandic Chamber of Commerce (and not related to the central banker), says, "It's going to be manageable. If you look at the scale of this economy, it's very small. When you look at historical records, when we've had shocks to the economy, which has occurred a number of times, it's bounced back very quickly."

Others are more pessimistic. Andres Magnusson, head of the Icelandic Federation of Trade & Services, says, "A lot of the companies will not survive—how many and which of them I cannot say. What I can say is the longer this situation maintains, the more likely it is that good and sound companies will become casualties. . . . Definitely two to three years of serious recession. Next year will be very difficult—there's no way to avoid that."

Hauksson hopes it's only two years. "The maximum it could go would be 30 months," he says. "If it's more than 30 months, we're dead." ♦

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Evil Under the Sun

Barack Obama and American exceptionalism

By Noemie Emery

"Does evil exist?" the Reverend Rick Warren asked John McCain and Barack Obama at the Saddleback Forum on August 16. "If so, should we ignore it, negotiate with it, contain it, or defeat it?"

"Defeat it," McCain said. "Not long ago in Baghdad, al Qaeda took two young women who were mentally disabled and put suicide vests on them, sent them into a market place, and by remote control detonated those suicide vests. If that isn't evil, you have to tell me what is." Obama took a more philosophical turn: "Evil does exist," he said. "We see evil all the time. We see evil in Darfur. We see evil, sadly, on the streets of our cities. We see evil in parents who viciously abuse their children. . . . We are not going to, as individuals, be able to erase evil, . . . [but] we can confront it. . . . One thing I think is very important is for us to have some humility. . . . A lot of evil has been perpetrated based on the claim that we were trying to confront evil. . . . Just because we think our intentions are good doesn't mean that we're going to be doing good." The Bible tells us there is evil everywhere under the sun (as does Agatha Christie), but the two men's ideas of it could not be more different.

To McCain, evil is something specific and vivid, a deliberate decision made by others—sometimes by movements and governments—to do harm: Auschwitz, the Gulag, the planned starvation by Stalin in the 1930s of millions of Ukrainians, beheadings and torture by militant radicals, bombs planted in soccer fields, planes flown into buildings. To Obama, evil is something that happens by accident, and quite often happens at home. To McCain, evil itself cannot be defeated, as it appears over time in differing guises, but each face—fascism, communism, radical terrorism—can be and ought to be beaten. Obama thinks evil should be confronted, but the concept of beating it seems out of the question. Efforts to do so suggest moral arrogance and may make things even worse.

There is merit of course in each of these visions, as evil exits in different dimensions and grades: There is the evil that exists in even "good" states and people, which must be accepted and worked with, and evil that crosses the line and must be dealt with forcibly. Knowing the difference between them is the prime task of statesmen, who must never use force when other methods will suffice, but not shy from doing so when only force can prevail. Cold War presidents such as Truman, Kennedy, and Reagan avoided military strikes at the Soviet Union while making it clear they were ready and willing to use them if necessary, while Franklin Roosevelt and (the half-American) Winston S. Churchill earned their chops and their place in American hearts by their early assessment of Hitler as evil, and their relentless desire to bring him to heel. For better or worse, from the very beginning, Americans have warmed to those who have promised to fight against evil—and ranked them on the side of the (relative) good.

The idea of America as a force for morality predates the founding of the nation. The first European settlers saw America as a noble experiment, a do-over for the corrupt and compromised cultures of Europe, and a chance in an unspoiled terrain of endless abundance to start the world anew. The Puritans saw themselves as the Children of Israel in a new iteration, delivered from bondage (in Egypt and England), escaped by the way of a perilous voyage (through the Red Sea, and over the ocean), and settled at last in their own land of promise, where their work for the Lord could begin. The Puritans built a religious community that they believed would serve to the world as a model of piety, under the terms of a covenant detailed by John Winthrop in 1630 that served as a template for the next 300-plus years of American history: "He hath taken us to be His, after a most strict and peculiar manner, which will make Him the more jealous of our love and obedience. . . . For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us."

Over time, the goal would change from sectarian piety to political freedom, but the religious dimension remained. Though "the collective salvation of the community was transformed into a form of government that would protect the rights of all citizens," as law professor Steven G. Calabresi was to put it, "the idea of America as a special place with a special people called to a special mission was never to go away." As a result, the United States was formed as the first country to be built on the idea of itself as a prime moral actor, on behalf of itself, and the world. "Americans are utopian moralists who press hard to institutionalize virtue, to destroy evil people, and eliminate wicked institutions and

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practices," wrote Seymour Martin Lipset in his book on the subject. "As Samuel Huntington has noted, Americans give to their nation and its creed 'many of the attributes and functions of a church.'"

As much as the first settlers of the Massachusetts Bay colony, the fathers of the Revolution and then of the new federal government took it as a matter of course that they were acting not just for themselves but on behalf of humanity, and that if they fell short of their mission, they would be forever and justly disgraced. Benjamin Franklin said a failure would be "a reproach and a byword down to future ages," John Adams that it would "merit . . . the indignation of heaven." In 1790, when President George Washington addressed the congregation of the synagogue at Newport, Rhode Island, and embraced them as fellow parishioners of the faith of the union, it was a sign that the creed of American nationhood had transcended the limits of sectarian difference, and was accessible as a civil religion to people of all faiths and none. As the American saga progressed on its way, its unique parallels with religious tradition—the flight of the chosen from bondage to freedom; the handing down of the law (the Constitution, and the Ten Commandments); the Original Sin of slavery and the bloody passion of the Civil War, ending in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln on, of all days, Good Friday—only deepened the sense of a singular destiny. And so it goes on to this day.

The great wars of our history—the Revolution, the Civil War, the World Wars, and the Cold War—the ones by which the country defined itself, involved the defense and expansion of liberty, which became as one with the nation itself. Typically, the men we remember are those who express this, and we love most those who expressed it best. Abraham Lincoln conflated the fate of the Union with the hopes of men everywhere. Elihu Root called the American soldier "different from all other soldiers of all other countries. . . . He is the advance guard of liberty and justice, of law and order, and of peace." This was the feeling of his friend Theodore Roosevelt. In a similar utterance, Woodrow Wilson, the son of a minister, said World War I gave his country the "infinite privilege of fulfilling her destiny and saving the world." Franklin Roosevelt, who coined the phrase "rendezvous with destiny" in regard to his country, said after Pearl Harbor that American force would be directed "toward ultimate good as well as against immediate evil," and declared in his last inaugural address that "[God] has given to our country a faith which has become the hope of all peoples in an anguished world." *Crusade in Europe* was the title Dwight David Eisenhower gave to his wartime memoir. Even in the one place in which America failed, it was the genius of Martin Luther King Jr. to cast his appeal for racial equality in this aspirational context, as the step that would certify the country's greatness, by erasing its one mortal flaw. His dream was, he said, "the American dream, that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed—we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal"—a promissory note handed down from the Founders, to which Americans of all races were heirs.

The two signature texts of American exceptionalism since World War II are John F. Kennedy's inaugural address in 1961 and a speech given by Ronald Reagan before he was president, at the first Conservative Political Action Conference, with a young and recently released POW named John McCain in the audience, on January 25, 1974. The two strike themes that go back to Winthrop, with the same notes of aspiration, inheritance, obligation, and destiny. "Kennedy's speech makes all the Puritan exceptionalist claims," said Calabresi, citing "rights flowing to man from God, the unique commitment of Americans to liberty," the torch being passed, which will light the whole universe, and "an apocalyptic battle between good and evil" with "God's work" being done here on earth. Reagan said the same things, only differently, and at a little more length. "I have always believed that there was some divine plan that placed this continent between two oceans to be sought out by those who were possessed of an abiding love of freedom," he said, following Winthrop, who stated, "God had chosen this country to plant his people in." As he concluded,

The Founders took it as a matter of course that they were acting not just for themselves but on behalf of humanity.

> We cannot escape our destiny, nor should we try to do so. The leadership of the free world was thrust on us two centuries ago in that little hall in Philadelphia. In the days following World War II, when the economic strength and power of America was all that stood between the world and the return to the Dark Ages, Pope Pius XII said, "The American people have a great genius for splendid and unselfish actions. Into the hands of America God has placed the destinies of an afflicted mankind." We are indeed, and we are today, the last best hope of man on earth.

For most of our history, American exceptionalism has run in the veins of both parties, with the Democratic presidents of the first two-thirds of the 20th century being among its most noted proponents, vigorously asserting American power in the name of transcendent ideals. Franklin Roosevelt was quick to define the Axis powers as evil, and to declare, the day after Pearl Harbor, that "the American people in their righteous might, will win through to absolute victory," and succeeding Democrats, such as Tru-

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man and Kennedy, would carry through on his values.

But after Vietnam, something broke in the Democrats, who took that costly miscalculation as a paradigm for crusading done anywhere, and came to believe that power was dangerous, that assertion was folly, and that patriotic displays were signs of a slavish obedience, simplistic thinking, unwarranted arrogance, and extremely bad taste. Hubert Humphrey, a Cold War liberal who ran and lost narrowly in the 1968 presidential contest, was perhaps the last nominee of his party to be wholly at home with the World War II language of righteousness and victory. In 1972, Democrats nominated George McGovern, a World War II hero who had evolved into a born-again pacifist and believed the United States had "blood on its hands." From then on, presidential elections tended to be conducted between a Republican who was an American exceptionalist and a Democrat who seemed to be less so, with the three elections in which the contrasts were least striking—1976, 1992, and 1996—being the three that the Democrats won. In 2000, though, the year of the tie, Al Gore, seen as a defense expert and hawk, was pitted against George W. Bush, who talked of a foreign policy that was "humble but strong." But by 2004, Bush had become Woodrow Wilson with bells on, and defeated John Kerry, who championed "nuance" in foreign relations and deference to international bodies and European elites.

Kerry had once served as lieutenant governor under Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis, who in 1988 had run against George Bush's father in a classic campaign derided by critics as simple-minded but was based on a series of symbols relating to the concepts of evil, of force used against evil, and of America's mission and role in the world. One symbol the Bush campaign seized on was Dukakis's veto of a bill requiring teachers to lead students in public schools in the Pledge of Allegiance, which Dukakis saw as protecting a right of dissent, but others saw as a tacit endorsement of the belief that the country did not deserve having allegiance pledged to it. Another issue was crime, symbolized by a program Dukakis defended in which convicts ostensibly serving life sentences without parole were allowed out on unsupervised furloughs, in the course of which one murderer had raped a young woman and stabbed and beaten her fiancé—Dukakis refused to apologize or talk to the victims, though he had met often with prisoners and their families, leaving the impression he had a hard time telling the difference between predators and prey. He compounded this impression in the second presidential debate when, asked if he would support the death penalty if his wife should be murdered, he replied calmly, "I've opposed the death penalty . . . I don't see any evidence that it's a deterrent, and I think there are better and more effective ways to deal with violent crime." In the words of Roger Ailes, then the communications director for the Bush operation, "He became the defense attorney for the murderer and rapist of his wife." The public decided it preferred a prosecutor. Obama's meandering response to the question of evil at the Saddleback Forum seemed in some ways a Dukakis answer, unwilling to commit to the use of force in the containment of evil, and unsure of where moral lines lie.

John McCain betrays no similar doubts. "I know of no other country in the world with the generosity of spirit and the concern for fellow human beings as the United States of America, and I think that goes back to the very beginnings," he told a public service forum at Columbia University on September 11, 2008. "We are the only nation in the world that really is deeply concerned about adhering to the principle that all of us are created equal and endowed by our creator with certain rights. And those we have tried to bring to the world." But McCain was no longer speaking for all the Americans, as a candidate uttering those beliefs would once have been. The pollster Scott Rasmussen in the course of the 2004 election discovered a deep partisan divide on the issue of American exceptionalism. "Bush voters agree, by an 83-to-7 percent margin, that America is generally fair and decent," Michael Barone summarized Rasmussen's findings. "Kerry voters also agree but only by 46 to 37 percent. Fully 81 percent of Bush voters believe that the world would be a better place if other countries were more like the United States. Only 48 percent of Kerry voters agree. Almost all Republican voters believe in American exceptionalism. Only about half of Democratic voters do."

This explains the campaign of John Kerry, who tried to run both as the heroic vet and as the protester who had called out his country for sinister actions. When criticized for the latter, he complained (as had Dukakis) that Republicans were questioning his patriotism, which was not really the case. Anyone running for president must love his country, in that he wishes the best for it, and wants it to prosper. The question is whether Kerry and Dukakis were American exceptionalists, who believed in the civil religion of greatness and mission. And there is reason to think they were not.

Is Obama a patriot, like Dukakis and Kerry, in that he wishes the best for his country, and would do his best for it? Certainly, yes—the doubts about him involve his qualifications and his ideas, not his intentions. Is he an American exceptionalist, in the tradition of the Roosevelts, Reagan, and Kennedy? Probably not. On much of the evidence, he seems to share the beliefs of that half of his party who define the country in terms of its flaws and shortcomings, see force as a problem, and are embarrassed by patriotic displays. His wife has called the country a "mean" one, and said it had done nothing to give her pride in it until her husband had started to rise in the polls. He sees the country's tale less as a glorious effort to fulfill a great destiny than as a catch-up

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effort to atone for failures, which have always been numerous: "What makes America great has never been its perfection, but the belief that it can be made better," he has said, never quite saying it is good in this moment, or good when compared with what others were doing, or that it ever can be quite good enough.

At times, Obama has tried to reframe exceptionalism in his own image, or a kinder, gentler form of it, in which the country's achievements are largely domestic, and come about mostly through talking, and hope. In 2005, Clinton speechwriter David Kusnet waxed ecstatic over a speech that Obama gave at Knox College in Illinois, in which he reclaimed American exceptionalism for the progressive movement, as Kusnet put it, "telling the stories of how successive American generations abolished slavery, addressed the injustices of the industrial age, defeated economic depression and fought fascism," finding heroism not as Reagan did in wars or in private endeavors, but in "collective action to solve social problems here at home."

Two things should be noted about this new iteration: Little is said, and only in passing, of the American role in saving civilized Europe from being overrun by aggressive tyrannies, a prime source of pride for McCain, as well as the Reagans and Kennedys; and in the progressive rendition, "soft power" tends to reign unopposed. Here is Obama himself on how progress is made in the world and this country:

> Nothing worthwhile in this country has ever happened except somebody somewhere was willing to hope . . . a group of patriots declaring independence . . . slaves and abolitionists resist[ing] that wicked system. . . . That is how the greatest generation . . . defeated fascism and lifted itself up out of the Great Depression. That's how pioneers traveled west.

In fact, the pioneers' road to a "better life" in the West was marked by the slaughter and/or displacement of Native Americans; the Committees of Correspondence were all very well, but independence was won over eight years of battles; fascism was finally defeated by the force of arms; and while abolitionists and brave slaves did their part in laying the predicate, slavery itself was put to the sword by the Union Army, in a war that killed 660,000 Americans, and whose first three years were marked by mistakes, misjudgments, and missed opportunities that make the war in Iraq seem well-run by comparison. The armed forces themselves seem to loom small in the mind of Obama, perhaps the reason why, earlier this year, when exhorting the young to public service endeavors, he did not mention a career in them as a valued alternative. In his world, which seems to resemble the Peaceable Kingdom, intentions and words do all the heavy lifting.

Obama's notorious speech in Berlin reinforces these elements: Hope can solve anything, values are relative, and power has nothing to do with the ultimate end. Berlin was saved, he says, because "Germans and Americans learned to work together and trust each other less than three years after facing each other on the field of battle." In fact, the Germans had little chance to do otherwise: They tried to conquer the world, were bombed into rubble, were occupied, and then faced being overrun by the Soviet Army. Good and evil are relative: "The two superpowers that faced each other across the wall of this city came too close too often to destroying all we have built and all that we love." But it was only one superpower that caused all the problems, that "liberated" the countries conquered by Hitler by conquering them in turn; that tried to starve Berlin, and force the West into submission, that put up the Wall, put up the barbed wire, and shot those who tried to escape. And, of course, hope conquers all: "People of the world—look at Berlin, where a wall came down, a continent came together, and history proved that there is no challenge too great for a world that stands as one."

In fact the world has never stood "as one," so it has never faced a challenge of any description, and has never done a thing for its suffering people, in Berlin or anyplace else. During the Cold War, the world was as two (or sometimes it seemed at sixes and sevens) and Berlin was saved only when one side beat the other, after more than four decades of testing and tension, by the threat and the pressure of force. Berlin was saved because Truman sent in the Air Force, because Kennedy was willing to risk war over Cuba, and because Reagan went ahead with his defense buildup and missile deployment, while liberals screamed every step of the way. Hope can do wonders, but the American military has been a more reliable agent of human deliverance. "Conflict-resolution theory posits there are no villains, only misunderstandings," writes Victor Davis Hanson, but military history suggests otherwise. The Berlin speech was marked by "reoccurring utopian assumptions about cause and effect—namely, that bad things happen almost as if by accident, and are to be addressed by faceless, universal forces of good will." This has not been the view of America's heroes, who have always believed that evil exists, and the United States exists to confront it. How will America—and the world—fare with a president who rejects this tradition? We may be about to find out. ♦

Obama sees America's tale less as a glorious effort to fulfill a great destiny than as a catch-up effort to atone for numerous failures: 'What makes America great has never been its perfection, but its belief that it can be made better,' he has said.

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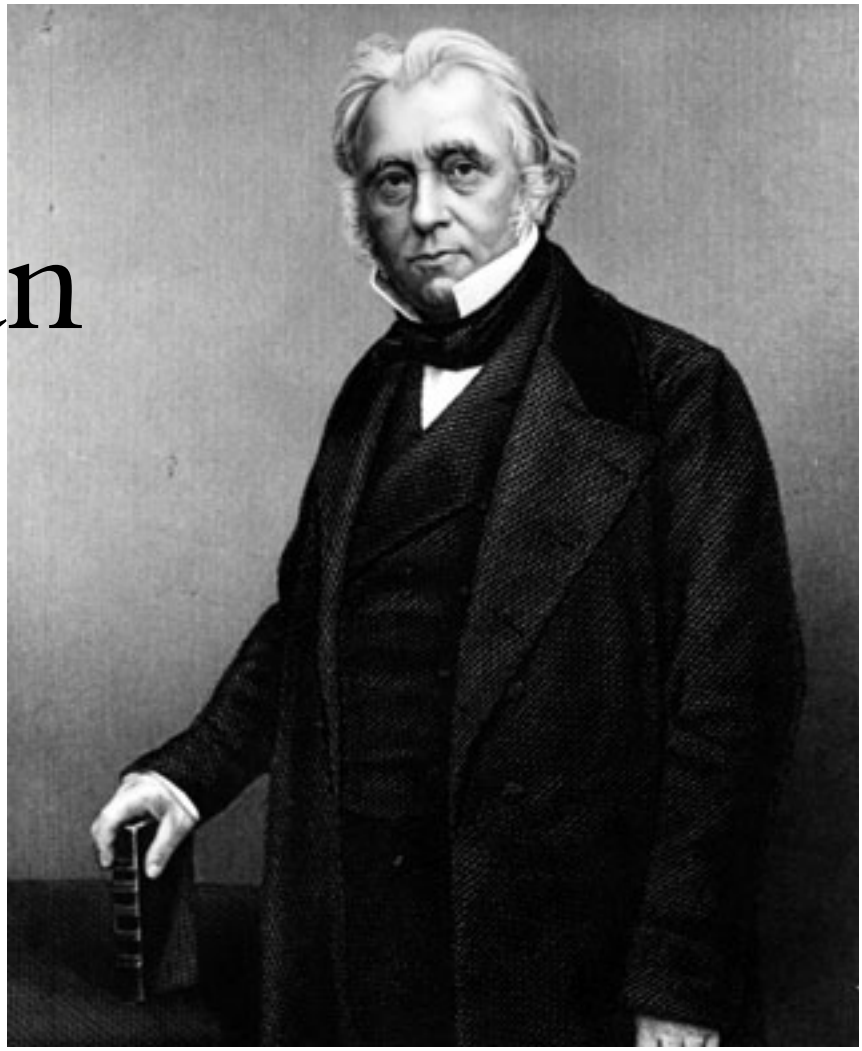
High Victorian Eye

On reading Lord Macaulay's Literary Essays

BY MICHAEL DIRDA



Thomas Babington Macaulay

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

Not long ago, I acquired for seven dollars a handsome Oxford University Press edition, published in 1937, of Macaulay's *Literary Essays*. For years I had been meaning to read more of this acknowledged master of English prose, best known for his classic *History of England*. This was, after all, Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859), and even as a kid in junior high school I used to murmur those gravely sonorous syllables with something approaching awe. Thomas Babington Macaulay was more a stately procession, with trumpets, than just a name.

I did know a little about Macaulay before beginning to read his essays: For instance, it was his puckish habit to introduce the most arcane references and allusions with the phrase "As every schoolboy knows." He originated what is now called the "Whig" theory of history (roughly, that things get better and better as the superstitious centuries advance toward the enlightened present). During his early and middle life, he served both in the House of Commons and as an Indian administrator, where he helped organize the colony's English-based educational system.

In my own boyhood I had even enjoyed his stirring, if overlong, anthem to Roman patriotism and courage, commonly called "Horatius at the Bridge": *And how can man die better / Than facing fearful odds, / For the ashes of his fathers / And the temples of his gods*. Sometime in college I also happened to read the *History of England*'s famous third chapter, a *tour de force* survey of life in the commonwealth around 1685, and the entry on Samuel Johnson for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Celebrated as a dazzling example of "romantic rhetoric," Macaulay's article was still being used as late as 1910 in the Britannica's revered 11th edition.

It was the promise of enjoying more of this elegant, measured, and often witty prose that attracted me to the *Literary Essays*. For much of his writing career, Macaulay contributed regularly to the *Edinburgh Review*, where he used new books as the opportunity to examine the poets, thinkers, and subjects that interested his wide-ranging mind. Generally, his more historical pieces—on, say, the impeachment of Warren Hastings—have been regarded as his true masterpieces in the short form. Yet those essays struck me, perhaps wrongly, as almost too narrowly British in their focus, whereas the literary reflections cover such world-renowned figures as Machiavelli, Bacon, Milton,

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John Bunyan, William Congreve, Joseph Addison, Boswell and Johnson, and many others.

As Macaulay himself recognized, his periodical journalism tended to a certain critical asperity, as well as a serene categorical absolutism in its judgments. (Lord Melbourne once complained, "I wish I were as cocksure of any one thing as Macaulay is of everything.") But at this date such pointed stings and arrows only contribute to the fun. One turns the pages of these digressive minibiographies—of 60, 90, or a 100 and more pages—simply to enjoy the literary fireworks.

Here, for instance, is Macaulay's portrait of Byron and Byronism:

> Never had any writer so vast a command of the whole eloquence, of scorn, misanthropy, and despair. . . .From maniac laughter to piercing lamentation, there was not a single note of human anguish of which he was not master. Year after year, and month after month, he continued to repeat that to be wretched is the destiny of all; that to be eminently wretched is the destiny of the eminent; that all the desires by which we are cursed lead alike to misery, if they are not gratified, to the misery of disappointment if they are gratified, to the misery of satiety. His heroes are men who have arrived by different roads to the same goal of despair, who are sick of life, who are at war with society, who are supported in their anguish only by an unconquerable pride resembling that of Prometheus on the rock or of Satan in the burning marl, who can master their agonies by the force of their will, and who, to the last, defy the whole power of earth and heaven. He always described himself as a man of the same kind with his favourite creations, as a man whose heart had been withered, whose capacity for happiness was gone and could not be restored, but whose invincible spirit dared the worst that could befall him here or hereafter.

He then goes on to undercut Lord Byron's romantic self-image, even while he laments its deleterious power:

> The number of hopeful undergraduates and medical students who became things of dark imaginings, on whom the freshness of the heart ceased to fall like dew, whose passions had consumed themselves to dust, and to whom the relief of tears was denied, passes all calculation. This was not the worst. There was created in the minds of many of those enthusiasts a pernicious and absurd association between intellectual power and moral depravity. From the poetry of Lord Byron they drew a system of ethics, compounded of misanthropy and voluptuousness, a system in which the two great commandments were, to hate your neighbour, and to love your neighbour's wife.

Today we seldom attempt such grand flights, but this is why it is so refreshing to turn to the older masters of English prose, especially those in the high oratorical tradition of Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, Edward Gibbon, and Macaulay. They possess an organ roll that thrills us like a Bach toccata played in a great cathedral.

As a historian, Macaulay emphasized that circumstances, the spirit of the times, shape history, and that we should be careful not to judge the past by the temporary rules of today. In the brilliant essay on Machiavelli he risks the accusation of stereotyping to contrast the northern idolization of courage and headlong heroism with the southern appreciation of ingenuity and self-control. This honeyed worldliness can be glimpsed even in the Italian attitude toward the corrupt Renaissance papacy:

> The people . . . had observed the whole machinery of the church, its saints and its miracles, its lofty pretensions and its splendid ceremonial, its worthless blessings and its harmless curses, too long and too closely to be duped. They stood behind the scenes on which others were gazing with childish awe and interest. They witnessed the arrangement of the pulleys, and the manufacture of the thunders. They saw the natural faces and heard the natural voices of the actors. Distant nations looked on the Pope as the vicegerent of the Almighty, the oracle of the Allwise, the umpire from whose decisions, in the disputes of either theologians or kings, no Christian ought to appeal. The Italians were acquainted with all the follies of his youth, and with all the dishonest arts by which he had attained power. They knew how often he had employed the keys of the church to release himself from the most sacred engagements, and its wealth to pamper his mistresses and nephews. The doctrines and rites of the established religion they treated with decent reverence. But though they still called themselves Catholics, they had ceased to be Papists.

In his literary opinions Macaulay can be astonishingly acute—finding Jane Austen second only to Shakespeare as a portrayer of human character—and frequently epigrammatic: "Dante's angels are good men with wings. His devils are spiteful ugly executioners. His dead men are merely living men in strange situations." Even though he loved the conversational wit of Samuel Johnson as displayed in Boswell's life, Macaulay blithely (and wrongly) dismisses the biographer as a nonentity and execrates Johnson's own Latinate prose: "All his books are written in a learned language, in a language which nobody hears from his mother or his nurse, in a language in which nobody ever quarrels, or drives bargains, or makes love, in a language in which nobody ever thinks."

Johnsonians have been battling this disparaging sentence for nearly two centuries now. But there is, of course, truth in it.

Throughout his essays Macaulay repeatedly alludes to classical authors, likes to use stories from the *Arabian Nights* to illustrate his points, and reveals his Evangelical upbringing in the easy pervasiveness of his biblical similitudes: "A time was at hand, when all the seven vials of the Apocalypse were to be poured forth and shaken out over those pleasant countries, a time of slaughter, famine, beggary, infamy, slavery, despair." Summarizing the polymath and politician Francis Bacon, he writes that "his understanding resembles the tent which the fairy Paribanou gave to Prince Ahmed. Fold it; and it seemed a toy for the hand of a lady. Spread it; and the armies of powerful Sultans might repose beneath its shade."

While many of Macaulay's essays are strongly biographical, aiming to bring his historical subjects to dramatic and blazing life, that on "Mr. Robert Montgomery's Poems" stands as the classic attack on literary "puffery," the artificial inflation of a writer's merit by his friends, minions, and publishers. The exaggerated dust jacket blurb is nothing new. Long ago Macaulay noted that "Some times the praise is laid on thick

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for simple-minded people. 'Pathetic,' 'sublime,' 'splendid,' 'graceful,' 'brilliant wit,' 'exquisite humor,' and other phrases equally flattering fall in a shower as thick and as sweet as the sugar-plums at a Roman carnival." Work after work is pronounced an immortal masterpiece, yet "how many 'profound views of human nature,' and 'vernal and sunny, and refreshing thoughts,' and … 'harmonies which dissolve the soul in a passionate sense of loveliness and divinity' the world has contrived to forget."

To my mind, the portrait of Madame D'Arblay—Frances Burney—displays Macaulay at his very finest, offering insightful appreciation of the early novels (especially *Evelina*), followed by criticism of the author's later prose (a natural style insidiously ruined by Johnsonese) and a scathing portrait of Burney's five years as a maid-in-waiting to the queen. By accepting this royal favor, the literary toast of London gradually dwindled into a sickly drudge:

> Weak, feverish, hardly able to stand, Frances had still to rise before seven, in order to dress the sweet Queen, and to sit up till midnight in order to undress the sweet Queen. The indisposition of the handmaid could not, and did not, escape the notice of her royal mistress. But the established doctrine of the Court was, that all sickness was to be considered as a pretence until it proved fatal. The only way in which the invalid could clear herself from the suspicion of malingering, as it is called in the army, was to go on lacing and unlacing, till she fell down dead at the royal feet.

Readers attracted to these wide-ranging and wonderfully entertaining essays should at least dip into George Otto Trevelyan's *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*. This is one of the great Victorian biographies, with telling details about the man behind the legend: One evening, we are told, Macaulay made 200 puns in a little over two hours. He had a weakness for the era's cheap romantic fiction, vaunted his ability to learn languages in a few months, and while in India took his pay from the *Edinburgh Review* in new books.

Best of all, we learn that the august Thomas Babington Macaulay was as vainly pleased as any modern author

A Man, A Plan . . .

The unintended consequences of giving up the Panama Canal. BY CRAIG SHIRLEY

Thirty years ago oil was at historic highs, gold prices peaked, and America's name was mud—*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. Then, the major league fight over the Panama Canal treaties pitted a liberal American establishment resigned to declining American greatness against an upstart New Right struggling to find its political and philosophical footing while battling the complacent elements of what was left of the Grand Old Party.

Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch
The Panama Canal Treaties and the Rise of the Right
by Adam Clymer
Kansas, 286 pp., $29.95

The two Canal treaties—the first to guarantee the neutrality of the canal through American force of arms, the second to cede control of the canal to Panama over time—represented a perfect political storm for the right, argues the longtime *New York Times* reporter Adam Clymer in *Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch*. Ordinary Americans believed that kowtowing to the Panamanian military dictator, Omar Torrijos, would only further weaken America's position in the world. Clymer makes the convincing case that the Panama Canal Treaties fight represents a watershed moment for the conservative movement, where it sharpened its tactics and vaulted itself into power.

When Theodore Roosevelt committed himself to doing what Europe's greatest empires had failed to accomplish—building a canal across the isthmus of Panama—he was signaling to the world that America's time had come. When Jimmy Carter (and all four of his immediate predecessors) agreed to cede that feat of American engineering and will to (in Ronald Reagan's words) "a tinhorn dictator," it seemed to many that Carter was signaling that America's time had gone. And in circles on the New Right, this unconditional surrender of American power and prestige could not be allowed.

In 1976, two years before the treaties went to the Senate for ratification, the struggling GOP candidate Reagan struck a nerve with his opposition to the treaties in the primaries. "We built it! We paid for it! It's ours and we're gonna keep it!" he thundered in speech after speech—and the issue catapulted him to within a whisker of wresting the Republican nomination from the sitting president, Gerald Ford. Even candidate Jimmy Carter took Ford to task for his plan to "give up complete control … in the Panama Canal Zone."

Clymer explains that Carter's reversal came after Henry Kissinger and Sol Linowitz, Carter's point man on Latin America, advised him that further delays in the treaty would cause irreparable harm to U.S.-Latin American relations, with Mexico even willing to dispatch troops to Panama's aid in the event of conflict. Panama's leaders frequently implied that the situation would either resolve itself peacefully (in Panama's favor) or violently. One of the most vocal extortionists, Manuel Noriega, an aide to Torrijos, briefed visiting U.S. senators on the "vulnerability" of the canal to a coordinated sabotage campaign.

After Carter took office, the treaty fight began in earnest as Carter, with

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the aid of establishment fixtures such as Kissinger and Ford, twisted senators' arms to reach the 67-vote threshold for ratification. Conservative organizations, including the American Conservative Union led by Rep. Philip Crane, and individuals such as Richard Viguerie and Paul Weyrich, joined forces to lean on soft treaty votes. "Truth Squads" toured the country to gin up opposition to the "giveaway" of the Panama Canal.

But the Right was not unified in its opposition. When Ronald Reagan signed an anti-treaty fundraising letter that raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Republican National Committee, RNC chairman William Brock refused to back the truth squads financially. Even William F. Buckley Jr. and cowboy icon John Wayne lined up for the treaties (Wayne and Torrijos were fishing buddies).

One of the signal innovations to come out of the treaty fight was the infomercial. Instead of selling kitchen knives to insomniacs, the American Conservative Union sold information and righteous indignation in 30-minute doses to nine million-plus television viewers. According to the broadcasts, Carter and his allies were conspiring to give away "the American canal in Panama" to Soviet-friendly, Cuba-coddling tyrants.

As Clymer notes, hyperbole was not new to American politics, but delivering it in such a palatable and accessible way certainly was.

And yet, despite a two-year media barrage, massive fundraising campaign, and the palpable opposition of the American people, treaty proponents scraped together the necessary votes for ratification. But the New Right had only just begun to fight, organizing to oppose pro-treaty senators. In New Jersey former Reagan aide Jeffrey Bell knocked off the old guard GOP senator Clifford Case in a primary, while in New Hampshire an unknown airline pilot and anti-treaty organizer, Gordon Humphrey, beat the incumbent senator Thomas McIntyre almost exclusively over the Panama Canal.

General Omar Torrijos

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

All across the country the New Right ran largely *against* Democratic luminaries rather than *for* their Republican rivals, and although these campaigns often came down to a lot more than the treaty, Panama was an undercurrent in almost every close race in the 1978 and '80 cycles—where the GOP picked up 15 seats.

This is a valuable book about an issue that has been largely ignored by historians, but which contributed immensely to conservative political success. And Clymer's wealth of interviews and insider knowledge—including, I should disclose, my own research material on the subject—makes *Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch* indispensable to any student of modern political history.

To be sure, readers should be wary of the lessons Clymer draws from this episode: Although he strives to be fair-minded, his bias occasionally peeks through as he blames the "divisiveness" of modern politics on the tactics and rhetoric conservatives first used to great effect in the treaty fight. But the legacy of that fight is this: Being too far out of touch with the concerns of average Americans can cost elected representatives their seats—as a number of Democrats and liberal Republicans learned firsthand. (Indeed, the issue was still so toxic 20 years later that neither Bill Clinton nor his secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, attended the formal handover of the Canal.)

Still, Clymer's bias is minimal, and he is "old school" in the sense that, while his politics may be of some particular persuasion, it almost never infected his prodigious and impressive writing for the *Times*. And as he illustrates here, the status of a small strip of land in Central America helped to propel Ronald Reagan into the White House with a Republican Senate and, as a result, transformed our country. In fitting paradox, conservatives won by losing. ♦

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Towering Ivories

Stanley Fish and his ideal of the American university.

BY PETER BERKOWITZ

Many people have as difficult a time hearing and giving due weight to the *liberal* in "liberal education" as they have in hearing and giving due weight to the *liberal* in "liberal democracy." But in both cases the adjective is critical: A liberal education is a specific form of education, one that fits individuals for freedom; and a liberal democracy is a specific form of popular government, one that protects individual freedom by limiting majority power.

Save the World on Your Own Time
by Stanley Fish
Oxford, 208 pp., $19.95

Their common connection to freedom connects liberal education and liberal democracy. Because individual freedom not only presupposes rights and responsibilities but also presents individuals and society with distinctive opportunities and temptations, liberal democracies depend on citizens of a certain sort: self-reliant, disciplined, tolerant, rational, industrious, open to the variety of ways of being human, informed about public affairs, and disposed to settle disagreements through compromise and under law.

Of course, this does not exhaust the list of human virtues, not all citizens display all these virtues or display them to the same degree, and some conspicuously lack them. Because virtues do not develop automatically, liberal democracies must take an interest in citizens' acquisition of them. But the state's interest must be circumscribed by its duty to protect individual rights: A liberal and democratic state cannot too directly or aggressively cultivate the virtues of freedom without compromising the rights it is established to preserve.

In executing this delicate balancing act, liberal democracies depend on the associations and institutions of civil society: the family, religious community, work, and, not least, education. This is not to suggest that these associations and institutions should become organs of the state. To the contrary; to reap their benefits, liberal democracies must respect their integrity and ensure their independence.

For example, by pursuing their distinctive ends, religious communities—or, at least, some religious communities—encourage individuals to care for their souls, which can serve as a counterweight to the state's emphasis on physical security and material abundance. Religion can also provide a ground for toleration by teaching that all human beings share a common dignity. A liberal democracy that is home to tolerant and law-abiding religions might reasonably go beyond tolerating them to supporting them. This does not mean enlisting or politicizing, but rather, say, eliminating their tax burdens and otherwise leaving them alone, enabling them to benefit the nation by fostering the virtues that flow from the pursuit of their distinctively religious mission.

The good reasons that liberal democracies have for supporting liberal education are even clearer. Liberal education hones intellectual skills that prepare students to contribute to the nation's prosperity; exposes them to the findings of the sciences and social sciences, making them more knowledgeable and sophisticated voters; and by deepening their acquaintance with the humanities, liberal education refines their judgment and enlarges their sympathies.

In other words, by directly providing nonpolitical benefits to students, liberal education indirectly provides political benefits to the nation. Were the state to commandeer the curriculum to disseminate a distinctly political message, it would destroy liberal education's private and political benefits. The consequences would be no less ruinous were it not the state but faculty and administrators who commandeered the curriculum for political purposes.

Stanley Fish, the title of whose book is an admonition to professors to keep their politics out of the classroom, understands a great deal about what is wrong with higher education in America. Unfortunately, his prescriptions for reform—which amount to little more than exhortations to faculty and administrators to mend their ways and, whatever else they do, not to explain or justify liberal education to legislators, private donors, alumni, parents, or students—are foolish and self-defeating. Part of the trouble is Fish's fondness for deflationary tactics and contrarian positions. The deeper problem is his failure to take seriously the *liberal* in liberal education and the *liberal* in liberal democracy.

Fish is the Davidson-Kahn distinguished university professor of humanities and a professor of law at Florida International University in Miami, as well as a regular blogger on politics and culture for the *New York Times* editorial pages. He has long reveled in his role as a kind of academic bad boy, only too happy, for example, to tout his taste for cars, celebrity, and high salaries.

But he is a bad boy with a witty and incisive mind and stellar academic credentials. He taught English literature at Berkeley and Johns Hopkins before joining both the English literature department and law school at Duke, where he also ran the Duke University Press. From 1998 to 2004 he served as dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He made his name as a young scholar in the late 1960s with *Surprised by Sin*, a major reinterpretation of Milton's "Paradise Lost." Works such as

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Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies (1989) and *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech and It's a Good Thing Too* (1994) earned him a reputation as a devotee of postmodernism and deconstruction.

While the reputation was not entirely undeserved, Fish remained his own man. He never produced the clotted prose typical of contemporary literary studies, instead cultivating a lively and entertaining style. And while he certainly read and absorbed cutting-edge theory, and in accord with it, propounded flamboyantly relativistic doctrines about human knowledge, he never took to invoking postmodern and deconstruction themes to advance partisan political agendas. He has preferred puncturing pieties to promoting causes, so much so that he has not been above spinning sophistical arguments to confound and defeat his many and varied interlocutors. As a sign of his iconoclasm, if not his daring, he has occasionally agreed, if not with conservative reasoning, then with conclusions more common to conservatives, even while (as in this new book) caricaturing conservatism.

Save the World starts strong, with a question inadequately addressed by today's faculty and administrators: "What exactly is the job of higher education and what is it that those who teach in colleges and universities are trained and paid to do?" It's not that our institutions of higher education don't have an answer. Peruse the mission statements of colleges and universities across the land, Fish observes, and you will discover that they believe that it is among their main tasks to promote social justice in myriad forms and form good human beings and citizens. Fish emphatically disagrees. Endorsing a "narrow sense of vocation," he contends that the job of institutions of higher education is intellectual work, which requires students to acquire knowledge, not join movements or parties, and construct and evaluate arguments, not celebrate and embrace values or causes.

But this narrow understanding of the university's mission is not, he immediately points out, a modest one: "If you think about it, that's a lot to ask. It's at least a full time job and it wouldn't seem to leave much room for taking on a bunch of other jobs."

In so arguing, Fish opposes not only postmodern proselytizers who assert that intellectual inquiry is politics by other means, but also distinguished left-liberal educators such as the former Harvard president Derek Bok, who contend that the university has a responsibility to mold politically engaged citizens. Fish recognizes full well that, in practice, this generally turns out to mean citizens engaged in left-liberal politics. In Fish's eyes, however, neoconservative and conservative critics (he uses the terms imprecisely and interchangeably) of our politicized universities are just as bad. Instead of undertaking to depoliticize the curriculum, contends Fish, they exacerbate the problem by seeking, under the cover of calls for intellectual diversity, to increase their political representation among faculty.

He never produced the clotted prose typical of contemporary literary studies, instead cultivating a lively and entertaining style. And while he certainly read and absorbed cutting-edge theory, and in accord with it, propounded flamboyantly relativistic doctrines about human knowledge, he never took to invoking postmodern and deconstruction themes to advance partisan political agendas.

In Fish's view, moral education and civic education conflict with professors' academic responsibilities, and lie beyond professors' professional competence:

> Teachers can, by virtue of their training and expertise, present complex materials in ways that make them accessible to novices. Teachers can also put students in possession of the analytical tools employed by up-to-date researchers in the field. But teachers cannot, except for a serendipity that by definition cannot be counted on, fashion moral character, or inculcate respect for others, or produce citizens of a certain temper. Or, rather, they cannot do these things unless they abandon the responsibilities that belong to them by contract in order to take up responsibilities that belong properly to others. But if they do that, they will be practicing without a license and in all likelihood doing a bad job at a job they shouldn't be doing at all. When that happens—and unfortunately it does happen—everyone loses. The students lose because they're not getting what they paid for (it will be said that they are getting more, but in fact they are getting less). The university loses because its resources have been appropriated for a nonacademic purpose. Higher education loses, because it is precisely when teachers offer themselves as moralists, therapists, political counselors, and agents of global change rather than as pedagogues that those who are on the lookout for ways to discredit higher education (often as a preliminary to taking it over) see their chance.

This is well said—except where Fish wrongly denies the moral and political benefits of professors' performing their academic duties scrupulously, and falsely insinuates that critics of the politicization of higher education typically have nefarious motives.

The university to which he wants to return, Fish stresses, would not be, as some of his opponents imagine, a sterile and dreary place, devoid of passion and indifferent to virtue. "No question, issue or topic," he maintains, "is off limits to classroom discussion so long as it is the object of academic rather than political or ideological attention." Such discussions—about the argument and action in Plato's *Republic*, the narrative sweep and cast of characters in

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Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, the causes of the American Revolution, changes in the social meaning of marriage, and the proper methods for studying morals and politics—are more than capable, as those who have experienced them can attest, of exciting students, focusing their attention, and arousing in them the hunger for knowledge.

And while in Fish's judgment any connection between college study and the exercise of moral and political virtue after graduation is remote and contingent—he goes so far as to deny that the study of literature and philosophy is edifying—he himself emphasizes that when they do their job properly, professors have every right to teach—indeed, can't do their job properly without teaching—intellectual virtues. These include clarity, rigor, innovativeness, and the courage to follow the argument and evidence where they lead. Professors teach these virtues not by lecture or exhortation but by demonstrating them in their conduct of class and in their carrying out of research.

When the aim of higher education is properly understood, Fish explains, it becomes clear that colleges and universities must not, as so many faculty are keen to do, declare, in the university's name, a foreign policy, domestic policy, environmental policy, or economic policy. The only kind of policy universities should have is an educational policy. Accordingly, Fish condemns "the vote by a major association of British professors to boycott Israeli universities and refuse to do business with Israeli professors until they had disavowed their country's policies and practices." Nor does he consider the boycott an aberration. The British professors' egregious politicization of academic life is "fruit of the same poisoned tree" as "announcing one's political allegiance in class, poking fun at the administration in power, railing against capitalism, giving the writing course over to discussion of various forms of discrimination."

Critics, Fish notes, will object that it is naïve or ignorant or both to ask professors to separate politics and ideas, either because of the psychological impossibility of setting aside one's formative and fundamental moral and political beliefs or because, in reality, everything is political. His pragmatism overriding his postmodernism, Fish will have none of it. While acknowledging that, from a psychological point of view, a perfect separation may be impossible, he points out that we successfully compartmentalize all the time, "making distinctions between contexts and the behaviors appropriate to them." And while assuming that knowledge is inevitably entangled with forms of power, he insists that the entanglements that emerge in the academic context do not commit one to positions on such questions as who should be president, whether taxes should be cut or increased, and when the nation should go to war.

Stanley Fish

THE NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX

Other critics will be quick to invoke academic freedom. But academic freedom, Fish rightly argues, is not a license to professors to say in the classroom whatever they please. Like the academic vocation, it is narrow, protecting professors' freedom to pursue academic inquiries where reason requires. Fish, however, does academic freedom no favors by declaring it "the freedom to do one's academic job without interference from external constituencies like legislators, boards of trustees, donors, and even parents." For where professors are betraying their professional obligations by spouting off about politics in the classroom—and his book provides more than ample testimony that substantial numbers of professors are derelict in their duties—those who are paying the bills and have a formal responsibility for the institution have an obligation to ensure that the rules and standards that govern university life be honored.

It falls, in the first place, to administrators to call to account professors who refuse to honor the line between education and advocacy. But this, Fish also indicates, administrators have, all too often, failed to do. True, dealing with faculty can be daunting. Drawing on his own experience as dean at Illinois and approvingly citing the experience of other administrators, Fish reports that professors tend to be parochial, selfish and self-indulgent, narcissistic, ignorant of what administrators do and how universities actually operate, and scornful of the task of administration and those who choose it.

So one can sympathize with administrators. But one should not, as Fish is inclined to do, let them off the hook. Administrators have at their disposal carrots and sticks—including faculty salaries, promotions, and leaves—and, were they possessed of the understanding and determination, could employ them to combat professors' politicization of higher education.

But neither the understanding nor the determination have been much in evidence. And alas, after a prolific 40-year career involving appointments at great public and private universities and five years as a dean of a large arts and sciences faculty, Fish provides little in the way of useful advice on how to reform a university world that, he shows, is very much in need of reform. His principal suggestion to faculty and administrators is to improve themselves while standing

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guard against wily conservative intellectuals and meddling state and federal legislators, who wish to co-opt the university for their own political purposes. At all costs, he counsels, faculty and university administrators must avoid explaining or justifying the university to nonacademics who, in his view, cannot possibly understand the university's purpose or value.

What begins promisingly and unfolds entertainingly and incisively ends frivolously. From Fish's account you would never guess that Allan Bloom's bestseller, *The Closing of the American Mind*, which 21 years ago launched the conservative critique of the contemporary academy, makes the case for strict separation between the pursuit of truth inside the university and the quest for political advantage outside it. Nor is Fish persuasive that legislators and private donors ought to keep their noses out of university business.

Legislators should not write blank checks with taxpayer money. Particularly when professors use universities (as Fish vividly describes) to indoctrinate rather than educate, legislators have no respectable choice but to exercise greater oversight at state universities over the expenditure of public funds. And private donors have an incentive to support neglected core classes through restricted gifts that oblige universities, if they take the money, to honor the giver's intent.

Contrary to Fish, faculty and administrators should not be less capable than plumbers and accountants, lawyers and physicians, kindergarten and grade school and high teachers, of explaining their profession's use to the public. Indeed, professors, whose professional lives on Fish's own account ought to be devoted to knowledge and reasoned argument, should be uniquely capable.

Moreover, just because intellectual work has its own rewards doesn't mean that it can't advance nonacademic ends. One benefit of liberal education—notwithstanding Fish's insistence that "fashioning citizens for a pluralistic society has nothing to do with the pursuit of truth"—consists in the contribution that it makes to the formation of free citizens. Seeking knowledge through the study of the humanities, social sciences, and sciences not only disciplines the mind but also improves understanding of the variety of human goods, and the range of arguments concerning their advantages and disadvantages.

Although liberal education does not guarantee virtuous citizens, it is reasonable preparation for prospering in a democratic and pluralistic society that provides individuals the freedom to pursue happiness as they see fit, provided they respect the right of others to do the same.

Fish is wrong again when he writes that "democracy, we must remember, is a political not an education project." Democracies—certainly those that seek to safeguard liberty—are political projects that depend on education projects. And liberal education is a culmination of democracy's education project. But to perform its work properly, and to justify its support by the state, liberal education must be governed, as Fish forcefully argues in the best parts of his book, by educational standards and not political considerations.

To be sure, there is paradox in that notion. But the hard part is not, as Fish extravagantly fears, explaining the university's mission to the public. The hard part is explaining it to professors. ♦

No Dracula He

Books, not blood, nourish a Transylvania tyrant.

BY LAWRENCE KLEPP

It sounds like somebody's screenplay. A mysterious, charismatic Hungarian king, known as The Raven, who had ascended the throne as a teenager after narrowly escaping a murder plot, first imprisons his fellow Transylvanian, Vlad the Impaler (aka Dracula), then invites him to be his guest, crushes the Turks in a series of spectacular battles, builds palaces and collects books, and marries a tempestuous Italian princess whose retinue of cunning Italian courtiers try (without much success) to introduce refinements like forks and individual plates to Hungarian dinner tables. Meanwhile, in drafty castles along the Danube, the envious nobles are plotting their revenge.

The Raven King
Matthias Corvinus and the Fate of His Lost Library
by Marcus Tanner
Yale, 288 pp., $35

But I don't think we'll be seeing Brad Pitt or Russell Crowe in the movie version of *The Raven King*, Marcus Tanner's account of the life and times of Matthias Hunyadi, or Corvinus (Raven), anytime soon. The story of the 15th-century king and national hero, who established Hungarian hegemony from the Black Sea to Vienna and was celebrated for his anti-Turkish prowess by Italian poets and several popes, ends in a series of anticlimaxes. He died young, in his forties, essentially from overeating, bloated and gout-ridden in Vienna. His wife, Beatrice of Naples, seems to have been remarkably ugly as well as overbearing: Forget Angelina Jolie, let's see if Rosie O'Donnell is available.

After his death in 1490, all of his achievements were quickly undone. He left the country bankrupt and divided. It was soon overrun by the Turks, who occupied Buda, the capital, for nearly a century-and-a-half. His palaces were

Lawrence Klepp is a writer in New York.

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destroyed or turned into barracks, the books he had accumulated in a magnificent library were lost or dispersed, Beatrice was tricked into a humiliating fake marriage with a Polish prince and finally had to slink back to Naples.

Marcus Tanner tries gamely to bring the king's story and times to life, interspersing his narrative with accounts of his own travels in Hungary and Romania searching for traces of lost palaces and books, but this is a book that will be avidly read by late medieval central European history buffs and bibliophiles, who can all fit comfortably into one not very large room. For the general reader, however, there are some arresting facts and anecdotes.

Matthias's library, which assumed mythical proportions during the nearly half-a-millenium when people were still looking for it, actually had only between 2,000 and 2,500 volumes in it. But that apparently made it the second largest in Europe at the time, outside the Vatican library, which wasn't much bigger. Of those volumes, ornately bound and stamped with a Raven insignia, only 216 survive in scattered libraries and collections in Europe and America.

Some of the scholars sent by the king to Italy in search of these books were notable oddballs. One of them discovered, and seems to have participated in, what can only be described as a flourishing gay subculture in Renaissance Italy, and we get some mildly obscene verses on the subject translated from Latin. Matthias and everyone else at the time consulted astrologers, the celebrity shrinks of their day.

Matthias himself seems to have been a relatively enlightened and good-natured despot. He actually read some of the books he collected. He didn't care much for religion. He got along well with the Jews in his realm. His "Black Army" of elite soldiers was notoriously ruthless, wiping out villages and everyone in them during his campaigns, but he didn't seem interested in the "strange tortures" and "sadistic eccentricities" devised by his Transylvanian colleague Vlad the Impaler. He won over the pleasure-loving Viennese after he besieged and occupied their city, and he tried, mostly in vain, to get Italian humanists to come and make Hungary more polished.

It cannot be said that Tanner succeeds in making Matthias Corvinus a vivid or memorable character. Although he was still very much remembered in Hungary in the 19th century, the country lost two-thirds of its territory (including Transylvania) after World War I and, under the Communist regimes in Hungary and Romania, his story, like his legacy, was effaced. Today, Tanner notices that even the Hungarian tourists in Budapest walk past his monuments without a second glance while heading for the statues of new national heroes, martyrs of the anti-Communist resistance like Cardinal Mindszenty.

But for those who have been to Hungary, and who like the country and people, as I have and do, Tanner offers, almost incidentally to his story of a half-forgotten monarch, the somber story of a country whose history has been a little too interesting for its own good. ♦

How to Write

Advice from the good old days remains timeless.

BY STEFAN BECK

A traveler passing through the Mid-Ohio Valley might see little incentive to stop in Parkersburg, West Virginia, with its landscape dominated by strip malls, windowless gambling parlors (deceptively styled "cafés"), and billboards advertising the hazards of copper wire theft and crystal meth. But Parkersburg's Carnegie Library, built in 1905 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is well worth the trip; today it is home to the Trans Allegheny Bookstore, without a doubt one of the finest—oddest—used book stores in America.

It's an excellent place to find something you didn't know you were looking for: a complete set of Samothrace excavation reports, a first edition of Herb Caen's *Don't Call It Frisco*, or a stack of World War II-era *Life* back issues. What it always has in stock, however, is a beautiful collection of antique children's books and textbooks, and it was in this cabinet that I made the shocking discovery of Edwin L. Miller's *Practical English Composition*, published in 1915 by Houghton Mifflin in four small green volumes.

By "shocking," I don't mean that it's rare or valuable but that it differs so markedly from today's pedagogy that it might as well have come from another civilization. Like the Carnegie Library itself—with its stained glass, wrought-iron spiral stairs, and glass-tiled floors—it belongs to a world which seems to have taken reading and writing far more seriously. It illustrates why so many Americans regard the ability to communicate eloquently much as Mark Twain's Britons regarded the solar eclipse in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*: as magic, rather than as something within any intelligent person's grasp.

What is one to make of a text for high school students which takes its epigraph from Samuel Johnson: "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to volumes of Addison"? Or which offers Thomas Babington Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* as a work "with which most boys and girls of fourteen are famil-

Stefan Beck writes on fiction for the New Criterion *and elsewhere.*

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iar"? Both examples fail the relevance test so prized by today's educators. But there is something wonderfully demanding in the "irrelevance" of Miller's old textbook. Its idiosyncrasy comes to the fore in its opening salvo, which dares to tell its students why they should know how to write:

> [T]he person who cannot write and speak fluently and correctly is at once set down as ignorant and inefficient. . . . [W]hile ignorance of chemistry or trigonometry is seldom discovered, a lack of skill in composition is instantly detected and punished. It is punished by that loss of the power to influence other people which is its inevitable consequence.

Few teachers today would admit that her students ran the risk of ending up "ignorant and inefficient." But George W. Bush has for years endured the punishment Miller describes, despite possessing "communication skills" at least equal to those of most of his detractors. The reason is that they see composition as an ability a president, not Joe Citizen, should have in spades. No surprise there, for the system Miller sets down for acquiring this skill is somewhat technical, calling for a practice and patience, and is a legitimate challenge even to capable students.

One must first have "something to say." He then assembles it, composes it orally, writes it down, and revises it. Revision is crucial. Miller notes that Macaulay "did not despise spelling and punctuation, but he did despise people who despise spelling and punctuation." The expectation that students might wish to model their tastes on Macaulay's seems quaint—doomed, to be perfectly honest—but it's worth a try.

Another suggestion, with apologies to Dr. Johnson, that "[n]o man except a blockhead or an angel ever wrote except for an audience," is bracing. One doesn't teach himself composition for therapy, or even for something so vague as "self-expression." He writes to persuade. Whether this is always strictly true, it's worth teaching. The ability to write should precede any reason for doing so.

Yet Miller's curriculum consists mostly of reasons for writing. In Book One he starts small: "Excuses for Tardiness" or a "Letter of Friendship About Your School." An injunction to describe a friend begins with the epigraph, "What a piece of work is a man!" There is no attribution—the reader should know, or should care enough to find out. "Write a description of one of the following," begins one exercise, and the list includes such "drab" personages as Napoleon, Lincoln, Nelson, and Daniel Webster. In Book Two the focus is on newspaper articles. Each chapter concludes with something to memorize, a snippet of Shakespeare, George Eliot, Cicero, Burns, or Kipling, to name only a very few.

There are sections on grammar—difficult grammar—and proofreading, versification, and rhetoric. That students should know the difference between trochee, iambus, dactyl, and anapest, when many of their teachers surely do not, will strike readers as absurd or comical, as will such earnest questions as "What figure is 'cadaverous cod'?" and "Why 'befuddled sails'?" or "What motive made Demosthenes an orator?" and "Are there any words in Lincoln's exordium which you do not understand?"

When the laughter dies down, however, a brutal truth remains: Fewer than 100 years ago, students were called upon to know far more than they do now, and to feel ashamed if they didn't. Further, they were expected to commit works of genius to memory, and to be inspired by this task to create great works of their own. Being part of literary history—or trying to be, anyway—was its own reward. "Why 'trumpeted'?" the student is asked after a selection from *Walden*. Why not?

These may be "stodgy" texts, but what they're designed to teach is apparent in all exceptional writing: a love of clarity and persuasion; a respect for tradition, even when one must break with it; an urge to be precise and punctilious and to excel within the bounds of the language, having truly mastered it.

"Architecture is frozen music," we're told, by Goethe, in a chapter asking us to "[d]escribe any building in the range of [our] personal observation." The "model" is a piece from the *Chicago Tribune* about the Grand Trunk "dippo" in South Bend, Indiana, the "obsoletest railway station . . . principally Gothic, with a little Hun and a bit of Cuckoo Clock."

I'd choose for my theme the Carnegie Library of Parkersburg, as obsolete as the learning it contains, and every bit as timeless. ♦

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Gag Me With a Law

What media 'fairness' and 'net neutrality' really mean.

BY CHRISTY HALL ROBINSON

In a period of unprecedented access to information, the First Amendment rights of freedom of the press and freedom of speech are in danger, warns *A Manifesto for Media Freedom*. The rapid development of media types and venues has prompted both new and revived attempts to control them, and in growing numbers policymakers, nonprofits, and pundits are advocating regulation of radio, television, the Internet, and other media.

A Manifesto for Media Freedom
by Brian C. Anderson and Adam D. Thierer
Encounter, 200 pp., $20

Brian C. Anderson, editor of *City Journal*, and Adam D. Thierer, senior fellow at the Progress and Freedom Foundation, offer a brief and timely defense of the First Amendment. Explaining what different regulatory proposals mean for free speech and freedom of the press, they demand that lawmakers and government officials *not* interfere with the constitutional rights of American citizens.

The Fairness Doctrine—a relic of the 1940s finally put to pasture in the 1980s—once allowed the FCC to force radio and TV stations to give equal time to opposing viewpoints. The effect, of course, was to discourage political discourse on the airwaves. Now it is making a comeback. Prominent senators—Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and John Kerry (D-Mass.)—have expressed support for it, and several Democratic members of the House—including Dennis Kucinich of Ohio and Louise Slaughter and Maurice Hinchey, both of New York—have proposed bills to reinstate it.

In the spirit of the Fairness Doctrine, "network neutrality" is a euphemism for regulation aimed at Internet service providers. Despite the nice alliterative (and Orwellian) term proponents have given it, network neutrality is "a recipe for technological stasis," say Anderson and Thierer. Net neutrality advocates—Hillary Clinton being one of the most prominent—want to regulate the way private network operators do business and price bandwidth use, preventing broadband firms from offering "ultra-fast delivery for sites or users willing to pay extra, just as FedEx accelerates delivery of packages for a fee."

This leveling of the playing field would limit market competition and amount to "infrastructure socialism," the authors believe. They also caution that regulation of for-profit network companies could quickly lead to proposals for a "Web Fairness Doctrine" or oversight of the "neutrality" of other for-profits, such as search engines.

In addition to regulatory proposals for specific types of media, Anderson and Thierer highlight campaign finance rules, "one of the biggest dangers to media freedom." They examine, in particular, the McCain-Feingold Act, which "made it a felony for corporations, nonprofit advocacy groups, and labor unions to run ads that . . .name or show . . . members of Congress within sixty days of a federal election." Further campaign finance "reforms" have targeted broadcasters and the blogosphere.

With the election around the corner, how a new president and Congress will approach regulating media is a pressing concern: "Should a Democrat take the White House . . . an array of new media regulations would be almost certain," the authors caution. Barack Obama has already promised to "clarify the public interest obligations of broadcasters who occupy the nation's spectrum," and "strongly supports the principle of network neutrality." But Anderson and Thierer are quick to point out that John McCain is no particular champion of the First Amendment, considering his role in McCain-Feingold and his statement two years ago that he "would rather have a clean government than one where, quote, First Amendment rights are being respected, that has become corrupt."

This timely volume laments that the "language of 'fairness' is beguiling" and deftly challenges the idea that it is the government's responsibility to oversee Americans' media consumption. The authors assert that "[i]n a media cornucopia, freedom of choice inevitably yields media inequality." It was (and still would be) unconstitutional to force media outlets to offer multiple viewpoints, but Anderson and Thierer also point out that the arguments in favor of "fairness" are no longer valid because of the vast number of websites, newspapers, television channels, and radio stations from which people can choose.

This small detail does not stop those "motivated by the naked desire for political control, a reactionary fear of the new, or genuine if misguided views on equality and fairness in the media" from attempting to limit media freedom. The strongest voices supporting media regulation are those on the left, but ostensibly "conservative" organizations—Parents Television Council and Christian Coalition of America, for instance—are also calling for neutrality regulation.

Given the bipartisan nature of these ill-conceived efforts to limit the First Amendment, readers will benefit greatly from *A Manifesto for Media Freedom*'s clear, succinct explanations of the various regulatory proposals, and what they would mean for media freedom and free speech in America. ♦

Christy Hall Robinson is an associate editor at the American Enterprise Institute.

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Parody

How did John McCain come to pick Sarah Palin? In its October 27 issue, the* New Yorker *theorizes that the pick stems from favorable publicity for the governor after her meetings with editors of* The Weekly Standard *and* National Review *in the summer of 2007, when cruises hosted by the two magazines both made stops in Juneau.

STATE OF LOUISIANA
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR BOBBY JINDAL
2031 COMMERCE DRIVE
BATON ROUGE, LA 70821

March 15, 2011

Dear Bill,

Just a quick note to mention that I see in the latest issue you and Fred will be hosting another of those great Weekly Standard cruises. What a wonderful opportunity for readers to get together with their favorite writers and editors and learn about some of the young, smart, dynamic public servants in elected office especially in states with legendary tourist attractions and thousands of square miles of waterways!

By the way, did you know that Louisiana's Lake Pontchartrain is the second-largest salt water lake in the United States, and despite its average depth of only four meters, can easily accommodate cruise ships? And if you and Fred plan to spend time in the state we modestly call the Sportsman's Paradise, where our swamps and bayous are not just ports of call but home to some of the most succulent seafood and tomato-based

STATE OF UTAH
JON M. HUNTSMAN, JR., GOVERNOR
89 MORGAN BLVD, SUITE 498
SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84107

The Weekly Standard
1150 17th St, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Febuary 8, 2011

Dear Mr. Kristol,

While perusing my latest issue of The Weekly Standard, which is required reading here in the Governor's Office, I couldn't help but notice that you are planning another cruise for readers. May I make two suggestions?

The first is that I suspect TWS readers will grow weary of listening to writers and editors talk about politics all day, and might welcome visits from popular governors and National Guard commanders-in-chief who are eager to share their ideas on making government more responsive to the people. My other suggestion is to tell you a little something about Utah's fabulous Great Salt Lake which, despite its location in the middle of a desert, is a popular destination for recreational boaters and cruise lines, and is teeming with habitat for native birds, brine shrimp, shore birds, and waterfowl. I may well be the only governor in the country who has shot and dressed a Wilson's Phalarope, for whom the Great Salt Lake is a migratory staging area.

Under separate cover, I am sending a copy of our latest brochures on Utah's popular ports of call, as well as the text of my forthcoming State of the State Address.

Yours truly,

Jon M. Huntsman, Jr.

Aloha Bill and Fred!

April 6, 2011

Am I guessing correctly that your next Weekly Standard cruise will be taking you and your *ohana* (family) and *hoaloha* (friends) in the beautiful month of *Aukake* (August) to the islands of Hawaii, where the beaches of Oahu meet the breakers of Maui and the fishing and snorkeling on the Big Island?

No time for everything we have to offer? *A'ole pilikia*—no problem! While the *kupuna* (grandparents) and *kamali'i* (children) swim and feast at *luau* I'll be talking to our distinguished *malihini* (visitors) from the Weekly Standard about how we've lowered taxes and created jobs on Molokai, established enterprise zones in Honolulu's inner city, and kept a close watch on Russia, which is only 4,000 miles away.

If this sounds like a dream come true for you and your fellow Weekly Standard cruisers, *ho'olu komo la kaua* (please join us) by writing to me or my chief of staff so we may coordinate our schedules.

A hui hou kakou (until we meet again)!

Linda L.

Linda Lingle

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